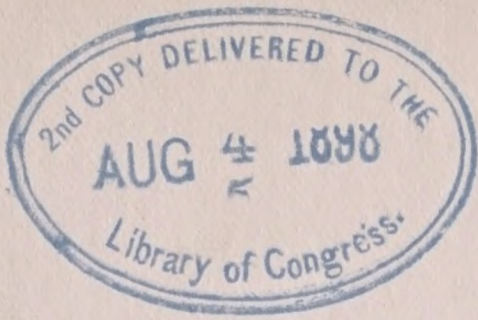


CHILHOWEE BOYS
IN HARNESS

SARAH E. MORRISON





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ALAN HAD THE EYE AND HAND OF A SURGEON.

CHILHOWEE BOYS

IN

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BY
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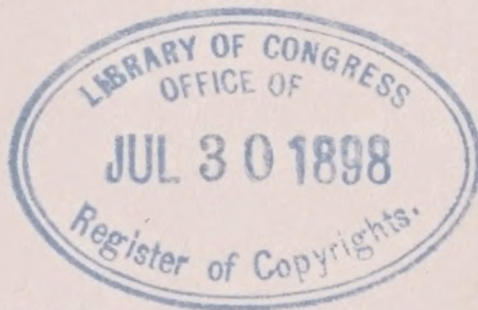
AUTHOR OF "CHILHOWEE BOYS," "CHILHOWEE BOYS IN WAR TIME," AND
"CHILHOWEE BOYS AT COLLEGE"

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PREFACE.

“CHILHOWEE BOYS IN HARNESS” completes the Chilhowee story. In it is told how the boys put on their armor, and how they fought and suffered and conquered in the battle of life. Each one, in so far as he adopted Don’s early and life-long motto, “Perseverando,” was successful in the struggle.

The honors and joys that fell to their lot were well earned; and the success of his “boys” was specially gratifying to Parson Craig, to whose efforts it was greatly due. He was rewarded by their love and esteem.

Though it was the fate of some of them to live far distant from their early home, it was their delight to visit Chilhowee, — “the old stamping-ground,” they called it, — and there together to recount the exploits and perils of their boyhood, and to view again the bright, beautiful scenes of which nature is so lavish in that favored region.

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CHILHOWEE BOYS IN HARNESS.

CHAPTER I.

AN EMBRYO DOCTOR.

"HALLOO the house!" shouted Dr. Thompson as he rode up to his gate. At the call a negro boy came running.

"Where 's Mr. Baird?" asked the doctor.

"Dunno, sah. Gone fishin', prob'ly, sah."

"That 'll never do. I want him in a big hurry. Has he got off?"

"Yes, sah; beyon' de orchard, anyway. Him an' Miss Nettie 'll stop dar to try de new bow an' arrers while Sol digs some bait."

"Everybody 's keen for play when I 'm not here to keep things going; hey, Pete? You 'd have been loafing with Sol if I 'd stayed away any longer. Now run after Mr. Baird as fast as you can trot. Tell him I must see him in the office at once. Saddle up for him as soon as you get back."

"Yes, sah."

Dr. Thompson, leaving his horse beside the porch, entered his office, and began to rummage among the jars of medicine.

Black Pete found his young mistress and Alan Baird still at their archery, so engrossed as to be forgetful of their fishing-project, though the pail with bait stood waiting for them. They had kept Sol to run for the arrows.

"Miss Nettie, massa 's done arrove!" gasped breathless Pete. "He sont me runnin' fer Dr. Baird. He got some wuk fer him immejut."

"Oh, that 's too bad, Pete! What 's brought pa home this time of day?"

"Dunno, miss. Sompin' onlucky, I 'low. He 's in a pow'ful takin'. I know'd it by de way he come tearin' up de lane."

"What 's that, Pete? Doctor wants me?" asked Alan, who had been to a distance to reclaim his arrow.

"Yes, sah; he 's after you in a gallopin' hurry. I mus' saddle you' hoss in a jiff, while you git you' orders."

"That sounds as if there was no help for it, Miss Nettie. I shall have to give up my day's pleasure, and knuckle down to work."

"It 's a great pity, Dr. Alan. Why, I have n't had a chance to beat you even once. But of course when pa behaves this way the fun 's gone. Sol, be sure to gather up all the arrows. Come, Tray," to her dog; "we 're going home."

"Bring the fishing-poles and tackle up to the barn, Sol," ordered Alan.

"An' be quick about it too, Sol," said Pete to his fellow slave. "You 'll ketch it fum massa if he don't heah you at dat wood-choppin' when he gits time ter listen."

When Alan at last stood before Dr. Thompson, the impatience of the latter was so manifest that he at once assumed an air of serious-mindedness.

"Anything gone wrong, Doctor?"

"I don't think you need ask, Baird. See the names on the slate since you left the office."

"Ike Turner and Jack Boyd? Oh, well now, Pete knew where I was. I 'd have come if he 'd even whistled for me."

"Isaac was after that Burgundy-pitch plaster for his mother. Is it ready?"

"Why, no! I declare I forgot all about it. I 'll spread it right away;" turning to a drawer in search of materials.

"Not so fast, sir. I need you for other work now.

But if you had made the plaster when I directed, Isaac would have found you in the office, and so would Jack Boyd."

"It 's no great miss about Jack. He came to have his tooth out, I reckon. He 's been growling over it this long time. But like as not he would n't have let me touch it, even after riding five miles on purpose. He 's acted that way before. I never saw a bigger coward about teeth."

"He did n 't come about teeth this time. I sent him myself for important remedies which he failed to get because you were not to be found."

"What 's the matter at Farmer Boyd's?" asked Alan, beginning to be interested.

"Mr. Boyd met with a very serious accident this morning at his log-rolling, — got a broken leg and a dislocated shoulder. It was as much as the men could do to get him home. I met one of them riding for me post-haste. I've been at the house ever since."

"It gave you plenty to do," said Alan, pleased and roused at the thought of a thrilling occurrence.

"Yes, sir; and I was badly hindered for lack of those things I sent for. I could n't get them, it seems, because you were off strolling with Miss Nettie. A fine way to tend my office. But your

playtime's done for to-day. I must send you right off to Farmer Boyd's with these remedies which I have prepared. Where are your saddle-bags? There, pack these things in and ride at once."

Alan filled the bags, while Dr. Thompson gave him minute directions as to the care of the injured man.

"The farmer is suffering severely; this laudanum is to relieve him when the pain is intolerable. Guard the vial carefully, Baird, and mind, it's only for external use."

"Certainly, sir."

"It will be best to stay with the patient till I get round again. He needs considerable attention; and Mrs. Boyd's tired out, and frightened into the bargain."

"When shall I look for you?"

"That I can't say. I have n't seen any of my important cases yet to-day on account of this unexpected hindrance."

Then the doctor flung himself on his horse, and started again on his laborious rounds; while Alan cantered off on Hawkeye, not giving much thought to the task before him, but looking right and left at Dr. Thompson's broad fields, and cogitating, —

"If I can only bear with the old fellow long

enough, I 've got a chance to own some of this fine property, and Miss Nettie into the bargain. Then would n't I get ahead of Ken! I 'd be master of a whole posse of niggers, and he 'll never own one. I could snap my fingers then at Dr. Kenneth Craig. It 's just too bad the way old Thompson makes me poke along for that certificate. He 'll wait till Doomsday before he gives me a right to call myself Dr. Baird. I reckon that 's because he 's afraid I 'd set up a rival establishment right off, and he 'd lose my services and his patients into the bargain. I certainly would n't stand such treatment if I did n't see a way to get even with him."

Alan's ride carried him deep into the woods where game abounded. "Here 's a fine chance for hunting. I 'll have to snatch time enough for a few shots. I don't reckon Farmer Boyd 's in as much need of attention as the doctor made out."

He had his hand on his gun, and was just turning into a by-path when he caught a glimpse of Dr. Thompson hurrying over a cross-road. "He 's a regular spoil-sport. I 'll have to wait till he 's farther off. Hurry up, Hawkeye, we 're going to see sick folks."

Once at the farmer's bedside, Alan was a model of attention. He knew how to do his work well; he

had a skilful touch and a reassuring manner. Tired Mrs. Boyd was glad to leave her husband to his care, and seek a much-needed rest.

Alan would not acknowledge even to himself that his main motive in trying to make his patient comfortable was that he might the sooner leave him to seek his own pleasure; but he watched the waning light, and cast impatient glances at his gun. "I reckon I 'll find I was cut out for a hunter by the time I make my fortune at doctoring," thought he.

At length the sufferer seemed to sleep; and Alan seized the opportunity to leave the room, gun in hand. "It 's somebody else's turn to sit here now."

He found the farmer's half-grown daughter on the porch, with her baby sister in her arms.

"Suppose you have an eye to your father for a while, Matty. He 's asleep, and won't need anything but just to have somebody sit in the room."

"I 'm afraid sissy 'll wake him up, Dr. Baird, if I take her in there; she 's so fractious. Ma said I was to keep her out of pa's hearin', an' hers too; so 's she could get a nap before it 's time to cook supper for the hands."

"Then, where 's Jack? Tell him to go sit with his father while I get a breath of fresh air."

"Jack 's hidin' in the woodshed with a ragin'

toothache. That five-mile ride to the doctor's and back again in the wind just done him up. He 's been groanin' that loud all the afternoon ma said he dare n't go a-nigh pa."

"Why did n't you tell me before? I could have cured him in no time."

"That 's why he 's hidin'. He says he ain't goin' to let you nor no doctor jerk his tooth out."

"Then he 's a big dunce."

Alan strode off in search of Jack, whom he found sitting on the sawbuck as miserable as could be with toothache, and as determined as any boy of ten ever was not to part with the cause of his trouble. The mere sight of some one capable of extracting his tooth terrified him.

"You sha'n't pull it out, Dr. Baird, no, you sha'n't!" screamed Jack, rushing from the woodshed, and putting a safe distance between himself and Alan.

"I don't believe you 've got any toothache, Jack."

"Yes, indeed I have. It 's jumpin' an' thumpin' fit to split my head open."

"Then you ought to have it out this very minute; here 's your poor father dreadfully hurt, and you not doing a thing for him just because you 've got a toothache."

"I did do somethin'! I rode five mile to git

med'cine for pa, an' you was n't there to give it to me! I 'd 'a' been glad to git my tooth out then; ridin' so fast in the wind set it achin' like all thunder; but I ain't a-goin' to let you pull it now, no, I ain't, Dr. Baird." The boy retreated still farther, and looked defiance at Alan.

"You need n't run off, you dunce; I 'm not going to touch your tooth. I could n't pull it if you wanted me to ever so much, for I have n't got any forceps here."

Alan regretted the omission. "Those forceps are the very things I ought to have put into my saddlebags, then I 'd have had Jack's tooth out whether or no. Now, how am I ever to get a chance to go off on that hunt?" Suddenly he remembered the laudanum bottle in his pocket.

"Come here, Jack; come right here," he called authoritatively. "I 've got the stuff that 'll cure your tooth."

"I don't want no med'cine," said Jack, looking askance at the dark liquid.

"Oh, it 's not going to hurt you; and that tooth 's got to quit aching so you can take care of your pa while I get a little rest. Here, where 's something to pour the stuff into? This will do."

Alan seized a tin cup which hung on the woodshed

door and poured some laudanum into it. "Come along, Jack; no need to stand there scowling when you 'll be well in a minute. Just take this stuff, and rub it around that bad tooth — then go right off to your pa. You ought to be there now."

Alan had left Hawkeye tied to the hitching-post instead of putting him in the stable, so determined was he to have his hunt. Now he ran towards his horse as he spoke, every step carrying him farther from Jack, who consequently heard nothing distinctly after "Just take this stuff."

"The boy won't dare disobey me," thought Alan. "I 'm the same as Dr. Thompson to him, and to lots of folks round here. It 's only because he 's such a crabbed old fellow that he does n't give me a right to my title. It makes him jealous to hear so many people call me 'Doctor;' I can see that."

Alan plunged into the forest, and soon gave himself up to the delights of his wild ride. He only regretted that it was so late in the day that he could not go far enough to satisfy himself. "At any rate, I 'll take back some birds for supper."

It was dusk when he returned to the farmhouse with his coveted birds. He saw lights in the windows. "I 'm glad to see things look lively," thought he. "I hope Mrs. Boyd's supper 's ready. I 'll

not ask her to broil these birds till breakfast. I'm hungry enough to eat anything now. This ride has made my appetite very sharp-set."

He was about to hitch his horse till Jack could stable him, when he saw another horse at the hitching-post which even in the dimness he knew to be Dr. Thompson's.

"Whew! that's more than I expected. I was n't looking for the old chap before morning. Following me up, is he? to watch me and my work. I don't like that. Come, Hawkeye, we'll go round to the stable; the doctor will have an idea then that I've only been out for a few minutes' walk to freshen myself up for a hard night's duties."

But his arrival had been noticed. He had no chance to turn from the gate; for several voices announced, "Here's Dr. Baird; he's come, Dr. Thompson."

"What in the world does this mean?" thought Alan, as he dismounted and ran up the path.

At the door a strange scene confronted him. Dr. Thompson and one of the farm-hands stood there, supporting little Jack Boyd between them. The boy was a ghastly object, his face livid, his body limp and helpless. Mrs. Boyd, holding a flickering candle, looked at her son and sobbed, while Matty, the

baby still in her arms, turned from the sight, crying bitterly.

"What 's all this!" exclaimed Alan. "What 's happened?"

"Do you need to ask, Baird?" said the doctor sharply. "You 're the one, sir, to explain this boy's condition. Where 's that laudanum bottle? How did you come to give Jack a dose of the poison?"

"Why I—I did n't—I never thought of such a thing!" Alan produced the tell-tale bottle with evident reluctance; it was almost empty.

"Jack said you told him to take it, Dr. Baird," asserted Matty; "and so he drank it right up, before anybody got a chance to see what was in the tin cup. And then he began to cry out loud; he said his throat felt as if it was on fire; it was worse than toothache."

"The poor child waked me with his crying," said the mother, trying to control her sobs that her sick husband might not hear; "and then, before I could fairly find out what ailed him, he fell into a stupor, and there was no rousing him, but I knew it was laudanum, for I smelled it in the cup."

"Did you let the boy get hold of the bottle, Baird?" asked the doctor.

"Why, no; and I only poured out the smallest

quantity for him to rub his gum with; oh, just the least little bit."

"Jack's condition indicates that the dose he has taken was by no means small."

"O Dr. Thompson! how will he ever get over it?" said the anxious mother. "He looks like death now. O Jack! Jack!"

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Boyd. This fresh air is beginning to have its effect; I'll keep him outdoors a while. Here, Baird, take hold of this other arm, and let Jonas have a chance for his supper. Come on, now; we must give the boy as vigorous exercise as possible while this stupor lasts."

Alan had a task not at all to his liking. He helped to carry the unconscious boy across the porch and down the steps.

"There, set him on his feet," said the doctor. "We must make him walk."

The poor child's helplessness was so evident that Alan said, "I don't see how there's any walking to be got out of Jack."

"You don't! Well, sir, it's our only hope; I've been working with him; tried everything. It's a bad lookout for you. If the boy dies from this laudanum, it won't be hard to know who is responsible."

Alan shuddered. He could not help seeing how he was involved.

"Here, put your wits to work, and find some way to keep the child's legs in motion. Poor lad, he no longer feels toothache or any other pain. This state is critical."

The doctor's anxiety alarmed Alan. "He has no time nor breath to scold," thought he. "I'd sooner he'd blare out at me than act this way."

"We must get off this wet grass," said the doctor presently. "I had no idea the dew had fallen so heavily. The lane will be drier walking."

As they dragged their charge through the gateway they passed quite close to Hawkeye, standing beside the fence, the bunch of birds at his saddle-bow.

Even in the dim light the doctor's keen eye saw the tell-tale feathers. "Ah, Baird, here is your trophy for which you risked the life of a fellow-being. Those birds would be bitter morsels to me if I had the eating of them."

Then they began their weary tramp up and down Farmer Boyd's lane.

"I took that ride to brighten me up for my night's work, Dr. Thompson," said Alan defensively.

"I trust it will have the desired effect, for you have tough work before you."

The doctor spoke in his driest tone. Alan knew he could not deceive him. "You 've doubled and trebled your task by going off pleasure-seeking. Why, Baird, if I had n't got here just when I did, the boy would have been a corpse. Then you 'd have had something to cure you of your thoughtlessness. And there 's the poor father so excited and distressed that he is in danger of fever on top of his accident; there 'd be a critical case."

For once Alan was speechless. He saw no way of justifying himself.

Presently Jonas came hurrying towards them. "Has he come to yet, Doctor? Mrs. Boyd wants to know. His father 's raving about Jack; there 's no gettin' him to hold still. He says he can't lie abed while his boy 's dying."

"An only son! Here, Jonas, take my place; I must go to the poor man; quiet is as necessary for him as exercise is for the boy. Baird, don't let the walking lag; the responsibility is with you."

CHAPTER II.

ALAN'S GREAT PREDICAMENT.

THAT was a dreary night to Alan. Jonas was not inclined to talk. The tramping of their feet broke the stillness. At times came the tinkle of a bell, showing that a cow or sheep was stirring; an owl hooted, and a night-hawk flapped its wings over the heads of the walkers. The howls of wolves were heard; then the farmer's hounds, asleep under the barn, roused up and ran into the forest, baying till the air resounded.

"Would n't I just like to be as free as those dogs!" thought Alan. "Bah! what kind of a scrape am I in now?"

No sound roused the boy, who hung on his supporters like a leaden weight.

"Is n't Jack ever goin' to wake up?" said Jonas at last.

"I don't think you 're doing much to help him. You 're half asleep yourself; I 'm dragging you both."

“That ’s a fact ; and the doctor said we must keep up a brisk trot. I ’m dead tired, you see. I could sleep on my feet easier than not. We ’ve had a tremendous day’s work. Log-rollin ’s enough in itself, but there was Mr. Boyd’s terrible accident ; that heaped trouble on everybody, an’ now here ’s a worse endin’ to a bad day. Troubles never come single.”

“Could n’t any one else come out to help ?” Alan was anxious for his supper.

“Not without you could wake Dan’l. He said to call him ; he ’s lyin’ on the kitchen settle a-purpose to be handy, but he ’s sleepin’ as sound as Jack. I ’low nothin’ ’ll wake him ’fore sunup, ’less it ’s a house a fire.”

Alan began to feel hopeless, desperate indeed. When would the boy wake ? If he never woke, what would be the fate of this ambitious young medical student, who had long felt himself ill-used because Dr. Thompson delayed giving him his certificate of qualification ?

“He ’s never going to give it to me after this ; he ’ll make it an excuse. Well, I reckon I ’ll be in a pickle if things don’t come right with Jack. Farmer Boyd ’s a man of influence ; his friends ’ll know how to make it hot for me. Well, I can run ; home won’t be the place, though. I reckon I ’d have to leave the

State, or hide among the Indians — follow Mr. Philip Gordon into exile ! ”

Alan became so absorbed in the contemplation of his dark prospects that he forgot his charge, and was only aware of his neglect of duty on hearing the doctor's voice at his elbow.

“ Why, Baird, you 're not giving this poor child exercise worth counting. It 's not possible I 've caught you napping ? and you too, Jonas ? ”

“ I declare,” said Jonas, “ I can't hold out much longer, Doctor.”

“ Nor I,” said Alan. “ I 've done all this walking without any supper, Dr. Thompson.”

“ Well, run up to the house for a bite, and send Dan'l to take Jonas's place.”

The man asleep beside the smouldering kitchen fire was roused by Alan's, “ Halloo, Dan'l, where 'll I find supper ? ”

“ What 's that ? Doctor wants me ? Jonas ? How 's the boy ? ”

“ He 's getting on. Yes, Dr. Thompson wants you. Where 's supper, I say ? ”

“ What there is, is on the table, so I heard Mrs. Boyd say. There ain't no cookin' been done since breakfast. Them two big accidents come in the place of dinner and supper.”

"The doctor 's in the lane."

Dan'l hurried away, while Alan tried to coax the fire into a blaze. "Short commons, I must say." The flickering light revealed the table spread with bread and cheese, a dish of butter, and a pitcher of milk. "I thought at a log-rolling there was always good fare and plenty of it. I wonder Mrs. Boyd didn't manage better."

But Alan was hungry enough to enjoy his repast, however plain; and was still lingering when Jonas appeared with a summons from the doctor.

"Dr. Thompson says he 'll have to leave Jack with you as quick as you can get there. He 's in a hurry to get back to the farmer."

Jonas stretched himself on the settle, and fell asleep at once.

Alan looked at him enviously and thought, "The doctor gives quarter to everybody but me. He orders me about and keeps me on the trot as if I was no better than a slave. I'm surprised to see myself submitting."

The doctor was still working with poor Jack, but he spoke hopefully when Alan appeared.

"The boy's condition is verging on the normal. After you and Dan'l have dragged him about a while longer he 'll be fit to be put to bed."

Alan was glad to see some limit to his task, but he was too tired and out of humor to feel thankful for deliverance from a great disaster.

In the early dawn the doctor sent him home. "Get what rest you can, Baird, I'll try to be home by breakfast-time."

"Breakfast! ha! I want my night's sleep first."

"I don't think that boy is cut out for a doctor," thought his preceptor as Alan rode away. "What a night he made for us, and through it all thinking only of himself."

Alan, cantering down the lane, seized the birds which had brought such disaster, and threw them far from him into a thicket.

"A wolf or panther may relish them more than I," he said with a bitter laugh.

For the next few days Alan practically had holiday, though Dr. Thompson was busier than usual, and evidently harassed.

"You've done yourself mischief, Baird," said he when he had time to discuss the matter. "The lad is recovering, well for you; but your carelessness, which came so near murder, has made a bad impression in the neighborhood. It's doubtful if you can live it down. For the present you can be no help to me except maybe in office-work."

"I don't see why I should be blamed so much for just a mistake, when things are coming all right too," protested Alan, who trembled for his certificate.

"Parents and friends have a right to think differently, sir. Common people are justly afraid of the laudanum bottle. But you need n't be idle. You can straighten out the day-books; fetch them here till I show you which accounts are ready to be reckoned."

The doctor, busy filling his saddle-bags, glanced at the individual accounts as Alan turned the leaves. "It's a large practice, and increasing. It's a shame, Baird, that you've not proved yourself worthy to share it, as I at one time hoped. Let's have your book; you'll have to incorporate some items from it into these bills."

Alan brought his day-book unwillingly; his way of keeping it never satisfied his preceptor.

"What have you against Derrick Smith? Here, I see:—

To an oz. paregoric for his mother-in-law,	\$0.12½
To vial of hive sirup, etc.,	.37½
To watch-key and ribbon,	.25

"What's that? Oh, for yourself! How often have I told you to keep a separate book for your

personal accounts? Now show me what you have against Tobias Mason:—

To a bottle of opodeldoc,	\$0.25
To extracting a bean from T. Mason's wife's sister's nose —	

“Oh, little Jane Coxe; why did n't you say so? You waste words.

To call and doing nothing.

“Baird, never make such an entry as that! When will you learn to express yourself professionally?

To a riding-whip,	\$0.43 $\frac{3}{4}$
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“Your own affairs again! There, I can't waste my time this way! Get your book straight first thing. After you 've done what you can with the accounts, make some ointments; these jars are all but empty.”

Alan did not like office-work. Now that he was discouraged he did not know how to persuade himself to begin his tasks. After the doctor left him he sat looking at the intricate records, and wishing he had any other work before him.”

“Dr. Thompson need n't complain of my accounts; his books are complete puzzles, and no better

kept. No use trying to study them out unless he 's at my elbow for a key. I reckon I 'm about done making his bills, anyhow. What 's the use of staying if he won't let me help in the practice? I wish Ken's wedding-day was nearer. I wish I had n't more than time to get to Chilhowee by starting to-day. I 'd just like to go it with a rush, and leave old Thompson in the lurch. Pshaw! where 'll be the fun without my certificate; there 'll be such a lot of M. D.'s, and I 'll be a nobody among them. I was sure I 'd have it to take home. Why I 'm under the thumb of a regular curmudgeon. He spoke of murder to me, when he knows I was the one that worked the hardest to bring Jack round. I 'd like to have some credit for that. And it was the simplest kind of a mishap; all the boy's own fault too, because he was so self-willed that he would n't come near enough to hear all I said. I just wish I did n't have to do another stroke of work here; but I reckon I 'd better make some ointments since I 'm in a hurry to worm that certificate out of the doctor."

Allan looked over the physician's formulas. "I hate to make salves; it 's just like going to school again, to be learning rules for such things. When I 'm my own master I 'll let somebody else do such

work as this. Next thing Dr. Thompson 'll show me the empty pill-boxes, and set me to choking over aloes. I 'd ten times rather do the riding than the office-work."

He was still refreshing his memory on ointments when he saw Miss Nettie and Tray in the garden watching Sol trim the roses. "Why can't I set Sol at this tiresome work? He can get the jars ready, anyhow; why, he can do everything with just a few hints; he 's smart for a darkey."

Soon Sol was making a pretence of work in the office, while Alan took his place in the garden, much to the satisfaction of the doctor's daughter.

"You 'd better let me help you while I can, Miss Nettie, for I 'm soon going away."

"To Dr. Craig's wedding? I can imagine what a fine time you 'll have. But you 're coming back, Dr. Alan, you surely are."

"I don't know about that, after the way your father 's treated me."

It was Alan's custom to air his grievances to Nettie, who was a ready sympathizer. Now she said, —

"I should think you 'd learn not to mind pa's blustering; he always gets pleased again."

"But this time he 's extra fierce. What does he

mean by calling a fellow a murderer, or next thing to it, when he knows I did everything in the world to straighten out that mistake? Why, Miss Nettie, he says I have n't a friend here. I'll be better off in Chilhowee; I've got plenty there."

"And so you have here. How could you help it after being here so long? Why, grandma takes your part, and Aunt Hadassah; oh, I'm sure they do. And I think you did splendidly, working so hard over Jack Boyd, and not complaining about it. I told pa so, too."

Sympathy put Alan in good spirits, and he was soon talking glibly of the coming event. Nettie was an interested listener. She had seen Kenneth Craig in Eastboro the year before; and she felt acquainted not only with him, but with all Chilhowee, through Alan's stories, with which he had entertained the family during his two years' residence at Dr. Thompson's.

"I'm going home to have a fine time, you may depend," said he. "It'll be really a splendid affair; a double wedding, you know. Ken's friend, Leigh Gordon, will marry Lucy Pratt, Margaret's sister, at the same time. There was a day when I thought Lucy might be my bride."

"That's why you don't like Mr. Leigh Gordon."

"No, indeed! What makes you think we're not friends?"

"Oh, from the way you always look when you speak of him."

"It's a pity I can't like him, for he's a regular gold mine."

"A pity for you; yes," laughed Nettie.

"But it was n't Lucy that did the mischief," protested Alan; "you need n't think it. That was only a schoolboy's fancy. I know my mind better now."

"One sister going to marry rich and the other poor?"

"Yes; Ken's got nothing but his practice. But Margaret Pratt's just come into a legacy from her uncle; so they can marry and have a magnificent wedding-journey—going to ride all the way to the East. Ken's to tend lectures there, and come back with his degree. To think of the way Ken Craig's getting ahead of me! I'll tell you what would be the very best thing for me, Miss Nettie; why, to step right into his shoes—take his place at Willowdale as Dr. Pratt's partner."

"Oh, and not come back here! Why, Dr. Alan?"

"Well, it would be just serving your father right. I'd like to be able to snap my fingers at him, and

tell him he need n't trouble himself to write that certificate."

Alan knew his words were a vain boast; but it pleased him to see that he could tease Nettie, and served still to enliven him when he returned to the office to perform his distasteful task of ointment making, assisted by black Sol.

When Alan at length rode away to attend the weddings at Chilhowee, the doctor said at parting, —

"Don't take too long a holiday, Baird, if you care to have that certificate."

"I can't promise when I 'll be back," said Alan, riding rapidly away, and thinking, "If I could only have got hold of that paper, I 'd have had courage to ask the doctor for Nettie; then I could have gone back to Chilhowee with a flourish. Now where 's any fun in this trip? Ma and pa could n't help being pleased with Nettie; just seventeen and so pretty, and the only heir to all this property. I 'd be doing better than Ken, after all."

CHAPTER III.

THE DOUBLE WEDDING.

MRS. PRATT'S mountain home was a scene of pleasant excitement. It was the hour before the weddings. The guests had all arrived.

Parson Craig and the two young bridegrooms strolled about under the trees in earnest conversation. The parson felt that now he was truly parting with his son. After to-day Chilhowee Parsonage would no longer be home to Kenneth, even in his thoughts, as it had been in his college days, and during his medical studies, even in the past busy months as Dr. Pratt's assistant at Willowdale. As the father looked back on the years of Kenneth's life since the memorable journey before the war, when together they entered Tennessee, he felt satisfied with his son's efforts and achievements.

"Your holiday is well earned, Kenneth," said he.

"To know that you and mother think so adds greatly to my happiness."

"The busy life is the one to be envied," said

Leigh; "how much more the man whose father and mother are spared to praise him." Leigh Gordon felt his losses keenly on his wedding day. Only Eleanor was left to bid him joy, while of Kenneth Craig's family not one was missing.

"Those school-days long ago made you my boy, Leigh," said the parson. "Now that you are marrying Margaret's sister, the tie is stronger than ever."

"Yes; it is one of the brightest links in the happy chain. To have the right to call Kenneth brother, and to carry him and his bride home to Leighton Hall on their wedding journey, is a great delight."

"No plan could be more agreeable to Margaret and me," said Kenneth. "How long I have looked forward to seeing Leighton!"

"And little dreamed that there you would spend your honeymoon," said the parson.

"I am only sorry that the visit will be so short," said Leigh, "that it is only a mile-stone as you hasten East to hard hospital work."

"Oh! I am looking forward to my new task with the keenest interest," said the young physician. "The knowledge that important duties await me will make the leisure days all the more enjoyable."

As the three strolled and talked, they could see

at each turn pictures of busy life. On the hillside where the orchard stood all in bloom, friends were adorning the spot chosen for the ceremony. Young Donald Craig was directing the work.

On the porch were grouped the three little flower-maids, to whose white attire Eleanor Gordon was adding touches of beauty with her skilful fingers.

"Is it a Virginia fashion to dress us in flowers, Miss Eleanor?" asked Phoebe Baird, looking admiringly at the transformation of herself and her companions.

"It 's the prettiest fashion the world over," laughed Eleanor. "There can't be too many flowers at a wedding. Every girl has a right to look lovely then."

"We ought n't to be finer than the brides," said Alice Murray.

"Oh! it 's all to do honor to our brides. Here, Bessie, this wreath is for you. You 're the smallest; I shall turn you into a veritable May queen."

"This is the beautiful way of a Christian people; I think that is it," said Nacoochee, who had recently come to Chilhowee as Major Logan's bride. "My major found flowers for me every day of the marriage moon; they grew even in the cold and dark to please me, he said."

"We can trust Cousin Robert for seeing what is beautiful," said Eleanor.

"Yes; my Major Robert has wide-open eyes," agreed the happy young wife. "And now we have not to seek far; for this is the flower moon, and the world is full of blooms."

"Yes, they are showered on us. Oh! Chilhowee is a world of beauty." Then Eleanor flitted away to help in the more important duty or pleasure of adorning the brides.

Every one was pleased to permit the Virginia guest to be mistress of ceremonies that day.

At length came the eventful moment. The wedding guests were grouped on the gently sloping hillside, where the turf was like velvet. The parson stood in the midst of the decorations, under a great blooming apple-tree, from which pink and white petals showered down on him continually.

"They 're prettier than snowflakes," thought Bess, as she looked at her father, and saw the air filled with floating leaves, pink and white, from the many blooming trees. "Oh, what a beautiful, beautiful time a wedding is!"

To ten-year-old Bess this was the grandest event of her life. She could have laughed from happiness, but she saw that the whole group was quiet

as if spell-bound. The singing of birds could be plainly heard. Then came the sound of her father's voice. Bess could almost imagine she was in church.

A wedding was always a solemn event to Parson Craig, but all the listeners could hear the ring of joy in his voice as he said the words which made Kenneth and Margaret husband and wife.

Kenneth's marriage was first, as was fitting. He was the parson's son, and his bride the elder of the two sisters.

Happy hours are always short. All too soon for those who felt the parting, the great festival was over, and the bridal party hastening on their wedding journey. Many friends rode with them for the first stage, among them Donald Craig, returning to college. In his first leisure hour he wrote to his grandfather:—

“I promised Ken that I would tell you all about our grand time at Chilhowee. I came back only yesterday from the double wedding. O grandpa, it was glorious! The only pleasure we lacked was that you and grandma were n't there. Every one else that Ken specially wanted was able to come. It was different with Leigh Gordon. His sister was his only relative there besides Major Logan;

but since Eleanor came, of course mammy and Jubal did also, and Leigh was content.

“Jubal said, ‘I ’lowed I wuz leavin’ Chilhowee fer good ’n’ all, Marse Don, when massa an’ me put out fer college; but when a weddin’s on han’ massa mus’ hab me along, suten, an’ mammy too, fer to tote Miss Eleanor safe ober de mountings an’ to scorch her an’ de two brides home again to Leighton Hall. It ’s big wuk; it ’s good it can’t come twicet.’

“At last we have all seen Eleanor Gordon, and every one likes her. She is very beautiful. She is delighted with our valley and mountain. She went sight-seeing everywhere. Leigh has given her the deed of White Apple. She danced through the lodge and all around it, and said she would n’t want a more beautiful home; and some day, when Leigh and Lucy can spare her from Leighton, she intends to live there.

“When mammy heard that she said, ‘I b’longs to massa, thank de Lord; an’ he ’s promised me faithful, dat once git safe home ag’in he ain’t gwinter ax me ter climb no mo’ mountings.’ And Jubal said, ‘If Miss Eleanor takes ter wanderin’, we can’t foller, we ’re ’bleeged ter stick by massa an’ Leighton Hall.’ But Eleanor likes to travel. She says

this journey was just a taste which makes her long for more.

“Ken wants me to say that you may certainly expect a visit from him and Margaret after they leave Leighton. I used to think that I should be the first one of our boys to visit you and Leigh, but it turns out to be Ken. Well, he has earned his holiday, and I ’m glad he has prospect of such a pleasant time.

“All the travellers seemed to have merry hearts when the journey began. I rode with them the first day. Then we parted; and I hurried on with Norton Collins, who had been one of our guests. He has a law-office in Eastboro.

“Dr. Temple was there too. He has taken Ken’s place with Dr. Pratt at Willowdale. We are glad to have him even as near a neighbor as that.

“Alan Baird went home on purpose for the weddings. Everybody calls him doctor; but he did n’t even show his certificate to his mother, so Thad’s sure he has n’t got any. Alan says Dr. Thompson can’t do without him, so he’s going back; but he must first have a few days’ hunting with Miles Hardy, for he does n’t get much holiday at the doctor’s.

“Major Logan and Ahila rode a half day’s journey

with the wedding-party, and then went back to Chilhowee, because the major had left Nacoochee with only Mammy Judy. Hugh wrote to grandma, did n't he, that Major Logan had married our beautiful Indian maiden? The major built a house not very far from the parsonage; and Nacoochee says now she has the desire of her heart, she can ride over to see mother whenever she wants to. Mother is very fond of her, and so is Eleanor Gordon. She calls her cousin; the major is her cousin, you know. She says Nacoochee is well named, for she is beautiful as the evening star.

“Major Logan said it was well our travellers had a large and well-mounted party, so that they need n't fear attacks from highwaymen nor wild beasts. Ned Pratt was returning to his law practice; he is Leigh's partner; so there were eight going to Leighton, and and all of the men excellent shots.

“Now that the wedding is over, Hugh expects to ride with father in a few days into the Indian country to begin his work. I think our Hugh will make a grand preacher. Ahila goes with them. He has decided to become a missionary to his people.”

Don had written rapidly, his sheet was nearly filled, and his candle burnt almost to its socket. He paused, his brow contracted; he had written on

pleasant themes, now thoughts came that troubled him.

"Shall I tell grandpa about John? Will it do any good? Why, certainly, he is wise about everything." Then again Don's pen went flying over the paper.

"It's a very strange thing to write about a Craig; and grandma and you will be surprised, — perhaps nobody knows it but me, father maybe does n't suspect it, — but John is angry and jealous because he thinks we three boys are going away from home to have fine times, and leaving him with all the responsibility of the farm. He does n't remember that this is Ken's first real holiday and a short one at that; for he is going East to plunge into hospital work, and to read hard for his degree. You see, grandpa, we Chilhowee boys are really getting into harness.

"John didn't seem to mind as long as Hugh was at home to superintend the farm. But he says now he hopes his turn will soon come to go travelling and see the world; he's tired of being cooped up in Chilhowee Valley; if he can't do better he'll run off! He's fifteen; father hoped he could go to college in a year or two, but John wants to go where he can make money. I think it would do him good to get a letter from you; you'll know just what to

write, and he is very proud when the post brings him anything.

“There! my candle is at its last flicker; it will hardly melt the sealing-wax.”

Parson Craig knew something of the workings of John’s mind, though the boy did not speak as freely to his father as to Don.

“I’m leaving you master here, my son,” said the parson as, one day soon after the weddings, he was about starting with Hugh on the journey of which Don had written.

“I don’t want to be master,” said John, with an emphatic shake of his head.

“O John!” cried Alec, “you’ve often said that’s just what you did want.”

“But when everybody goes off, and I’m left with everything to do, it’s different.”

“Keep a brave heart, John,” said his father. “You’ll not have more to do than usual. Your Uncle Will has promised to spare his man part of the time till I can make some better plan.”

“It won’t be long before Don’s vacation,” said Hugh. “Then all will be straight enough.”

“You’re coming home before that, aren’t you, Hugh?” asked John.

“If he does, he will likely go away again soon,”

said their mother. "We must spare Hugh for his life-work now."

"I wish I was twenty-one, and going away," said John.

"You're big enough," said Bessie. "You'll be a giant when you're twenty-one, I reckon."

"John's a good protector for your mother and you, Bess. I'm glad to have such a strong son to leave in my place."

Presently Mr. Craig and Hugh rode away.

"There are two Parson Craigs now," said Alec, as the cedar forest hid them.

"And Don will make three," said Bessie.

"Oh! not this long time."

"That's not what I'm going to be," said John, "nor a doctor like Ken, neither."

"You can't be if you don't go to college," said Alec.

"Well, I'm not going."

Mrs. Craig, who had returned to her spinning, heard the talk as she sat near the window at her wheel. She understood John, and felt sorry that his temper hindered him from being made happy by what pleased every one else.

"It's plain Ken's good time has come," said John one day, after reading a long letter addressed to him-

self. "I don't see how he finds time to write to anybody when there are so many dinners to attend and so much sight-seeing to do."

"He knew you would n't like it if he missed this mail when it was your turn to get a letter," said Alec.

"I 'd just like to be in Ken's shoes, seeing the world, instead of having to look after the stock and the crops every day."

"You 'd make a big jump," laughed Alec, "the fourth son to take the place of the first. Ken's shoes 'll have a chance to get worn out. Hugh says Ken had a harder time when he was our age than we are having."

"I don't believe it. He had us to help him. Now we 're left in the lurch. I am, anyhow."

A letter from Parson Craig, saying that he had found an opening for Hugh, so that he expected to return alone, only served to increase John's discontent.

"I 'm the one that ought to live among the Indians, instead of Hugh," thought he. "Hugh can't bear rough times, but I 'd enjoy wigwam life. I think I 'd like it even better than the fine ways at Leighton."

These thoughts were still in John's mind when one

day he rode to the blacksmith's to have one of the farm-horses shod. He liked to visit the smith's shop; for Jacob Webster was apt to entertain him with tales of adventure, talking as he worked.

"I 'd like to be a great traveller like you, Mr. Webster," said John, after listening to an account of flat-boat life on the Mississippi. "I 've never been any farther off than to Knoxville, all these years father 's lived in Tennessee; and you 've gone twice all the way to New Orleans, have n't you?"

"Yes; and walked home both times through the Indian country with empty pockets; no money to buy even the sorriest nag. You would n't like such travelling."

"I 'd like to see the world that way if I could n't do any better."

"The journeys were both big misfortunes to me, John, no pleasure in them. An empty pocket means a heavy heart, anyhow when a man has a family to support. I 've never got over the losses of those two ventures. It was venturing, there was my mistake. When a man starts out without knowing which he 'll do, 'make a spoon or spoil a horn,' he 's apt to fail. Your father 's been a wiser man than I, and his sons are reaping the benefit."

John could not but notice the smith's serious air,

and he knew Mr. Webster was a truthful man ; still, he was not convinced, but thought as he rode home : “ I ’m sure I could get some good out of such chances ; it would pay me just to see the sights, but I know I ’d make money some way.”

The smith thought, when he remembered John’s face as he stood listening : “ That ’s the son that ’ll give Parson Craig trouble if any of his boys do. Pity, too ; I always did like that youngster, a stirring, go-ahead lad he is.”

John’s ambition and energy made him do good work in spite of his discontent. He prized approval ; he coveted his father’s “ Well done, my son.”

Then came a long letter to him from Grandfather Craig, which delighted John. From the opening words, “ John, loved grandson,” to the last line, the signature, “ Your ever devoted and affectionate grandfather, Donald Craig,” there was not a syllable which the boy was not proud to read to everybody, so skilfully had the wise old man worded his counsels.

And for a time John Craig’s unruly spirit was at rest.

CHAPTER IV.

ALAN HANGS OUT HIS SHINGLE.

"HERE 's great news from Alan!" announced Mr. Baird, as he began to read a letter which Thad had just brought.

"Oh, then he 's got his certificate!" cried Phœbe. "He said he would n't write again till Dr. Thompson gave it to him."

"I 'm glad," said Mrs. Baird. "Poor boy, he was out of all patience about it."

"Well, he 's fledged at last. And what 's more, he 's coming home to practise."

"O pa!" lamented Mrs. Baird; "I 'm afraid that means the doctor 's not satisfied."

"It means that the old fellow knows Alan well enough to see he 'd make ducks and drakes of things if he allowed him to meddle much."

"Do please read the letter, pa," begged Phœbe. "What does Alan say?"

"Oh! he 's very well pleased. He says 'Old T. 's nothing but a riddle, but Nettie and I understand

each other. He won't agree to anything; tells me to go home, and forget her, anyhow till she 's eighteen; but if I get a good practice — can prove it by my books — he 'll maybe talk to me then. He thinks I 'm in for a big holiday, and the coast will be clear for Nettie's other beaux. But that 's a great mistake. Why, Nettie 'll come into all her mother's property when she 's eighteen, — Sol, and I don't know how many more niggers. I 'm bound not to lose such a streak of luck. It 's pure jealousy in the doctor not to want me here; he knows I 'd soon be more in demand than he, if he made me partner; a young doctor 's sure to be popular. Well, I 'm lucky to have a chance to hang out my shingle in Chilhowee before Dr. Ken gets home. I intend to swoop up all the practice, and let him whistle. I wish I 'd known sooner how things were going to be settled, so that you could have had an office built and ready for me; but the doctor has only just now given me my certificate — my 'walking ticket,' he seemed to regard it. You can expect me home any day. Hurrah for liberty!"

Tears stood in Mrs. Baird's eyes. "The dear boy is glad to come home. I do hope he will be happy in spite of his disappointments."

"Happy! there 's no doubt of that," said Mr.

Baird. "Why, Alan 'll feel like a king, monarch of all he surveys, when he gets home to settle. I don't know how that 'll suit us ; and I don't see where his disappointments come in, anyhow."

"Why, husband, you know he wanted to go East, like Kenneth. He said he 'd never get over it that he could n't."

"It might have been the making of him," agreed Mr. Baird. "Well, Alan 's got himself to thank for his losses. He can never say we stood in his way. I 'm glad the doctor had sense enough to put him off about Miss Nettie. I reckon it 'll turn out to be only a boy's fancy."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Baird.

"Are you going to build him an office, pa ? " asked Phœbe.

"I 'll have to study on that, child. I always allowed if I did any more building, it would be a parlor for you."

"Oh ! I wish you would, pa ; I 'm tired of waiting. You 've promised it ever since Alice Murray's father built hers."

"Well, well, Phœbe, I 'm expecting to some day ; but it 's easier said than done. And here 's Alan asking for an office in a big hurry, as cool about it as if he was only calling for his breakfast."

"Maybe if you built the office you could build Phoebe's parlor at the same time," suggested Mrs. Baird.

"Why, that would be just double work. But we 'll see what Thad has to say on the subject."

No task was undertaken in the Baird household without consulting Thad. He listened to the news with pleased eagerness. "Doc Alan! comin' home all so fine, too! I knowed dere wuz sumpin tip-top in dat letter, when I seed how tickled you-uns wuz."

"Yes, we 'll have lively times now," said Mrs. Baird.

"And hard work, too, Thad," added Mr. Baird. "Your young master must have an office built right away. We 'll have to get help from the neighbors. I think, ma, I 'd better take the time to ride over to Willowdale, and get a look at Dr. Pratt's office, then I 'll know better what I 'm about. What do you say, Thad?"

"Could n't do no harm, massa, but dat 's a pow'ful long ride. De folks all know Ole Saddle-bags' place down to de settlement; dey 'll not go fur wrong."

"With that for a pattern! a tumble-down shanty!" protested Mrs. Baird. "Dr. Alan will want something better than that."

"Certainly he will," agreed Mr. Baird. "I 'm glad I thought of that visit to Dr. Pratt. I 'll go one of these fine days."

Thad, returning to his wood-cutting, shook his head and meditated. "Jes like massa's own self, goin' about pleasurin', an' when 'll dat orfis git built? Little missy's parlor ain't had de fust stroke put to it yet, an' her 'mos' growed up. But Marse Alan 's diffunt; he ain't got her patience, dere ain't no wait in him. I 'low he 'll git dat buildin' if he wants it bad."

Alan followed his letter so quickly that his father had gone no farther than talk in his projected work. The delight of the whole family on seeing him was so apparent that the young doctor could not help being gratified.

"I knew it would just suit you, ma, to have me at home again," he said. "How 's that office coming on, pa? Waiting for a chance to see Dr. Pratt's! Pshaw! there 's no use in that; I know well enough how I want mine built. I would n't mind going over myself, of course, if Ken was still there; but Temple 's not my friend. I 'm glad he 's no nearer than Willowdale."

"Have n't you even called the neighbors to the log-rolling? Now, ma, is n't that too bad? Phœbe,

why did n't you see that pa made a start? Here I 've brought home a great lot of drugs from East-boro, and now where shall I put them?"

"You must have been pretty sure of patients, to make you do that, Alan," said his father.

"Of course I am. I intend to get up a big practice."

"I don't see why he should n't, pa," said Mrs. Baird, "at least as long as Ken 's away."

"Ken won't hurt me when he gets back. Is n't he going to settle in Mrs. Pratt's old house? If the valley people begin to come to me, they 'll not climb that steep road afterwards to go to him."

"It does look as if you had a chance," agreed his father. "Old Saddle-bags won't be much in your way, I reckon; he gets so stiff with rheumatism every now and then that he can't mount his horse."

"He ought to give up in my favor. He must be in his dotage. He 's been at the settlement ever since we came to Tennessee."

"He set your broken bones when you came near dying in that terrible horse-race long ago, Alan," said his mother.

"Oh! when Whitefoot was killed?" said Phœbe. "I can just remember it."

"I was only a boy then; I don't want to remember it."

"But you ought n't to forget that Dr. Smith saved your life," said his father. "I hope you 'll treat him well, since you 're a fellow physician."

"I shall have to see about that office myself, pa, that's plain. Hawkeye 's tired out with the journey, he had as much as he could carry; but if you 'll lend me your horse to-morrow, I 'll ride round and invite the friends to help in a hurry. Dr. Thompson told me not to waste any time in starting my practice, and I 'm bound to keep on his right side."

The next day, as Alan was starting on his ride, he said, "Ma, I hope you 'll begin to think about getting up a big dinner for the neighbors." Then, seeing Thad within hearing, he added, "They 'd be keen to come if they knew Thad was going to give them a barbecue. I 'll go to Miles Hardy first; he and his father will be capital helps."

Thad listened, and then turned to his work, smiling grimly as Alan rode away. "Dere 'll be a chance to study on dat barbecue idee, if Marse Alan gits goin' along with Miles; he 's in fer playtime, sutenly; he 'll disremember all about his orfis fer de time bein'."

Alan returned in the evening, bringing a quantity

of fine game. "Look, ma, at my luck!" he cried. "You 'll think it 's worth while for me to be home if I keep you in birds for the table."

"O Alan! it looks as if you 'd been hunting all day. I thought you 'd be too busy for that."

"Why, ma, it 's a new thing for you to mind my having a little pleasure. I 've had glorious sport, Miles and I — he 'd soon be a famous hunter if he 'd stick to it, instead of going off stage-driving. When I found how soon he was starting on his route I knew I could n't do better than to hunt with him while I had the chance. I want to learn his ways, you see."

"Miles Hardy is a mighty cunning hunter," said Mr. Baird; "there 's none better in Chilhowee."

"When 's the house-raising to be, Alan?" asked Phœbe.

"Oh! soon enough. You don't need to bother about it. If you 'd been working under old Thompson, you 'd want a holiday. Don't you think so, pa? I did n't know what a slave I 'd been, but I saw the difference to-day. The Hardys all say that the best way to get the friends together is to have one or two big hunts. I 'll meet everybody that way; and when they know I 'm home to stay, they 'll get that office put up in no time."

Thad, carrying the game to the spring-house, spoke his thoughts aloud. "Marse Alan 's de same ole coon as ever. Doc Alan, is he? I can't hardly believe it. It don't come handy to say. I 'low de timber fer dat orfis 'll git a chance to grow a spell longer same as fer Missy's parlor."

Mr. Baird's view was: "No harm to let the boy have his swing, now that there 's no old curmudgeon to call him to account. I wonder he stood that kind of a life as long as he did."

"But the way he 's managing, he 'll be apt to miss his first patient, and that would be such a pity," lamented Mrs. Baird. "I 'd think that a real disaster."

"You 're just borrowing trouble, ma," said Alan, who had been listening. "My first patient 's coming to-morrow, and I 'll be on hand."

"You 're luckier than I thought," said his father. "Who is it?"

"Mrs. Hardy, coming to have a tooth out."

"O Alan!" protested his mother, "you know how I hate such things. Why did n't you pull it while you were there?"

"Could n't, ma; had n't any forceps along. I'd have been glad enough to do it, for it 's just double the fee at the house. But Miles is coming over to

go shooting with me beyond White Apple, and his ma 's coming along. She said she 'd enjoy the visit, and be glad enough to have the tooth out if it does n't stop aching."

"Why, she 'll be here to spend the day waiting for Miles. Phœbe, we must be thinking what she 'd like for dinner."

Miles brought his mother in good season. "I thought I 'd best tote ma over quick, 'fore she got out o' the notion," he said.

"'Deed, an' you was the one that was keen fer comin', Miles, not me. I don't know as I 'll let you touch that tooth, Dr. Alan. It 's been gettin' better every step of the way."

"Oh! it 's just humbugging you," said Alan. "An aching tooth 's up to all manner of tricks; better have it out, and be done with it."

"Yes, ma," urged Miles. "Where's the use dilly-dallyin' about an old snag that 's got nuther bite nor chaw left in it, an' plagues you every meal-time?"

"Oh! that won't do, Mrs. Hardy," said Alan. "Ma can't bear it if her friends don't enjoy her dinners. Come, now, it 'll be out in a minute. I wish I had my office ready, but the porch will do as well for this. Miles, just hold your ma's head steady, won't you? When I get things fixed I 'll have a chair with a head-rest, but you 'll do as well now."

"Catch me at such work. I can't do it. I'd let go an' run, quick as ma begun to holler."

Mrs. Baird and Phœbe, busy in the kitchen making pies, heard what was said.

"Alan will be calling for you, Phœbe, next thing, like as not," said her mother.

"Let him then. I'll not go if he calls till he's hoarse. I wish he had n't come home."

Presently Alan shouted for Thad.

"It'll take all hands and the cook to help Alan practise medicine, I'm afraid," said his mother.

Soon the task was done.

"Ma, here's Mrs. Hardy waiting to see you," announced Alan. "Ma and Phœbe are big cowards about nothing, Mrs. Hardy, or they needn't have been hiding all this time." Then, as his mother appeared, he said, "Mrs. Hardy started my luck, ma, paid me my first fee," — jingling the money gleefully. "Now, Miles, I'm ready, and so is Hawkeye."

Alan's next patient was Farmer Hunt. The poor man's saffron-hued face showed plainly that his ailment was jaundice. The Bairds regarded him as an old friend; he had, indeed, been the first to welcome them long ago to Tennessee. They were sheltered under his roof while their house was building,

and again when it was destroyed by fire before the first year was over.

Mrs. Baird welcomed him, and lingered to say some sympathetic, friendly words; but when she heard Alan speak of blood-letting, she fled with Phoebe from the house. "Oh, how I wish that office was built!" was her wail.

Again Alan called for Thad's help. The arrangements were the most primitive. The patient grasped the handle of a broom firmly, to facilitate the flow of blood from the arm. Alan had the eye and hand of a surgeon, and did his work well, so that the sick man went away satisfied.

The young physician laughed at his mother's squeamish woes. "It almost seems as if you had rather the patients did n't come, ma, instead of making them welcome for my sake. Of course I want that office, and I 'm sure to have it before long. One good thing, you 'll not be bothered with my patients to-morrow; for we 're going to have the biggest hunt of the season. I 've engaged Thad to give me an extra early breakfast. And if anybody comes, wanting my services, you can pack them right off to Dr. Smith at the settlement."

CHAPTER V.

ALAN'S HOME PRACTICE.

ALAN had been gone several hours the next morning when a wagon drove up to the gate. A woman alighted, and hurried up the path, while a man remained to hold the horses.

"I wonder who is coming, Phœbe," said her mother, at the sound of the wheels.

Phœbe, seeing the woman, cried, "It 's Mrs. Campbell, the new neighbor from the other side of White-water." And they both hastened to the porch to meet her.

The Campbells were a Scotch family, recently come to the valley. The Bairds had met them at church, and knew they were friends of the Craigs and Murrays, especially of Janet Murray.

Mrs. Campbell asked for Dr. Baird, and seemed greatly disappointed on hearing that he was not at home, and would be absent all day. She wanted him in haste for her little son, who was lying in the wagon suffering intense pain from a dislocated shoul-

der, caused by falling out of the hayloft that morning.

“We ’ve cam a lang, weary way, his feyther an’ I, wi’ the puir laddie. An’ now we must turn, an’ gang double the journey to the settlement. Aye, but it ’s woful wi’ the child in such sair trouble.”

“There ’s nobody nearer than Dr. Smith. Oh! I do wish my son was here, but he may even be away all night.” Mrs. Baird was ready to weep from sympathy for the Campbells and disappointment for Alan. “He would have been very glad to do what he could for the child.”

“An’ he ’s strang an’ skilful, I ’ve heard tell. It ’s the like that ’s wanted for sic’ wark. It ’s mysel’ knows that, for I mind havin’ a shouter like Wattie’s ae time in Scotland.” Remembering her old home caused Mrs. Campbell to lapse into broader Scotch than before, as she told of her own experience. “Aye, but I was much racked wi’ pain the day, e’en to me finger ends, where the quick was startin’ from the nails from the strain o’ the muscles; I thought the doctor was lang a comin’ for all he rade fast. Quick as he saw me, he kent what was wanted, for he was a varra skilful man. He aff wi’ his shoon, an’ him on the flure, and me on the flure, wi’ his fut in my arm-pit, an’ him

pullin' at my hand for dear life. 'T was a sair tussle, muckle pain; glad was I when the wark was done, an' the joint pulled fairly into place again."

"And your poor boy has to go through all that suffering?" said Mrs. Baird.

"Aye; it's his mither that can feel for him, puir little laddie. An' it's mischief that can't be got over in ae day nor twa, even wi' the help o' the best o' surgeons. Afther my shouther was set, it was weeks upon weeks before I could clutch a needle."

"O Phoebe! it's too dreadful that Alan is n't at home. Can't we do something for Mrs. Campbell? Won't you bring the child up to the house to rest awhile?"

"I'm fearful o' lettin' the time slip; trouble like this is the worse for waitin'."

"Thad's just brought him some water from the spring," said Phoebe, who had been watching the wagon.

"Then that's all," said Mrs. Campbell. "Puir Wattie's pain's so sair that he can't think to want anything till he gets rid of it. Guid-morrow. We must tak' up our journey again."

Mrs. Baird and Phoebe watched the wagon till it turned away.

"O Phœbe! it seems as if it 's been nothing but trouble since Alan came home. I thought I should be proud to have him a doctor, but I 'm really ashamed now. I could n't bear to tell that poor woman what took him away to-day, — just his own pleasure."

"She 'll hear it some way; and it 'll be bad for him, I 'm sure. Why it 's just like cheating to put up his sign, and then go out hunting all day. Oh! I 'm ashamed, and angry too."

Thad stopped at the porch before going to work again. "Dat 's a bad miss for Doc' Alan, mistis. He 'll sutenly feel it in his pocket, if he don't nowhere's else."

"O Thad! I don't see how he can be so foolish as to lose his chances this way."

"Good wuk an' good pay, dat wuz. Marse Alan 'll be jes' hoppin' when he hears 'bout Ole Saddle-bags gittin' it. Mr. Campbell said he 'd pay double an' more, sooner 'n tote dat chile ober any more rough road. He suffered fearful, fer all dey had a bed an' pillers fer him in de wagon, an' his ma tendin' him constant."

"If there had been any hope of Alan's getting home before the day was over, they would have waited for him."

"So dey tole me. But 't would' a' been no manner o' use, fer Marse Alan 'lowed to me jes' as he wuz startin' dat he'd be gone fer two days prob'ly. Dey's goin' to carry de hunt funder off to-morrer, an' he'll stay with Miles or som'ers else."

"O Thad! he did n't dare to tell such a plan to his father or me. He knew better."

"That sign of his ought to come right down," said Phœbe, eying it indignantly.

"Marse Alan tole me he 'lowed ter hang dat shingle to a post at de fur end o' de lane, so 's everybody on de road 'll know where to find him."

"Then I hope he 'll build his office there," said Phœbe, "instead of near the house, so we won't have any more bother."

"His office!" said her mother. "O Phœbe! when will it ever be built?"

Thad felt as hopeless as his mistress, but did not speak his thoughts.

"I could cry for that poor child, riding all these long miles with a shoulder out of joint," said Mrs. Baird. "I 've seen the boy at church with his mother, a pretty, rosy-cheeked little fellow."

"Well," said Thad, "when I seed him dis mornin' he looked dat white an' tired out, you 'd 'low he 'd been sick a long spell."

"I do hope Alan will be sorry for being away," said his mother; "but he 'll miss whoever comes to-morrow."

"Mebbe not, mistis; dere 's a storm gatherin'. I feel it in de air. If it breaks, de sport 'll have to wait."

The next morning the sky was so threatening that Thad made sure to get all his stock under shelter, and Mr. Baird lighted a fire in the sitting-room."

"We 're in for an all-day gust, ma," said he.

"Oh! I do hope Alan will be weather-wise enough to hurry home."

"He is," said Phœbe. "I hear his horse in the lane, but the rain 's ahead of him." She retreated to the house as the great drops came pattering on the porch roof.

In a few moments Alan entered. "Ha! it 's good to have a fire, pa."

"You 've come home too late, Doctor," said his father.

"Why, no; I got in just in time to save a drenching."

"But not in time to save your credit, nor to put money in your pocket. You 've met with a big loss, sir."

"Why, pa" —

"Yes, Alan, I was so grieved at your being away yesterday," added his mother. "You missed a patient."

"A patient? Well, ma, I don't see why you need mind. I thought you hated to have patients come here, as long as I had n't any office."

"But, Alan," said Phœbe, "this was little Wattie Campbell, and his shoulder" —

"Now, you need n't all be so eager to tell me a story I know already. Mr. Hardy heard it at the settlement last evening; and I 'm mad as fire, of course, to think Old Saddle-bags got a chance to pocket my fee."

"Yes, and a chance to crow over you."

"It 's ten dollars for setting that joint, and of course there 'd have been a bill for attendance. You 'd better believe I mind such a loss. It makes a man feel mighty poor, happening just at the beginning of his practice too."

"And all his own fault too," added Phœbe.

"That 's not fair, Phœbe," protested Alan.

"What hurt me most," said his mother, "was to think how the poor child suffered, and his parents, too, in their anxiety."

"Now, ma, what 's the use of saying any more

about it? Things can't be helped when they 're all over, can they? They 'd better be forgotten."

"I reckon you have n't set the ball rolling yet for that office, Alan," said his father.

"Yes, I have, pa; I saw lots of friends yesterday, and they 'll come when I send for them. Of course nobody can do such work in a bad spell of weather like this. Listen to that storm. I 'm glad I got home. Ma, if you 'd just clear off this table, and let me use it, I could unpack some of my drugs, and make some pills and powders, then I 'd be ready for sick folks. It 's just the day for such work, when nobody can stir outside."

They were all interested in Alan's stores. He displayed his handsome Wedgwood mortars, and his dainty scales and weights. Phœbe soon learned to balance them, and Alan was delighted to show her all about the making of powders.

"Better not try to learn those things, Phœbe," said her father, who sat beside the fire smoking his pipe. "You 'll find you have a house on your shoulders if you don't look out."

"Now, pa," protested Alan, "you 've got to let Phœbe help me if she wants to. I never could bear to do such things by myself. I taught Sol to make

them at the doctor's. I wish he was here now. I 'll miss him awfully when I get busy."

Presently Alan began to pound something in his large mortar, and soon his mother began to sneeze.

"What 's that, Alan?" cried she. "Oh! it must be aloes."

"Of course it is, ma. Did n't I say I was going to make pills? I must have aloes."

"But it chokes me, Alan; I never could bear it, not the least particle. Oh! do be careful not to spill any on the carpet. How could I ever get rid of it, and this is my new carpet too!"

Mrs. Baird sought refuge on the porch in spite of the rain.

"Pa, Alan 's the one that ought to go out, not ma," said Phœbe.

"I don't see that it would do any good now, the room 's too full of the stuff; ma can't abide it, I know."

Phœbe found her mother crying bitterly on the porch.

"Child, child, what shall we do?" sobbed she. "I never dreamed of what was before me when I encouraged Alan to be a doctor. To think of my being driven out of doors."

"I would n't ever let Alan do it again, if I were you or pa, I 'm sure of that. And you can't stay here; see, the rain 's coming every way; you 'll get wet, and be sick. I 'm going to call Thad to make up the kitchen fire this minute. It 'll soon be time to start dinner, anyhow."

Thad was Phoebe's confidant and sympathizer. He understood his little mistress's woes better than either of her parents did.

"What will ever become of ma, Thad?" said Phoebe. "Every day since Alan came home the trouble seems to get worse."

"Pore mistis! she ain't fit to have doct'rin' goin' on in her house, dat 's a fac'. She 's gittin' ole an' peaky under it. She had orter go off wisicatin' som'ers or nother, an' jes' hab a good restin'-time till Marse Alan gits kinder settled in his orfis an' wuk, with his patients comin' to him reg'lar an' keepin' him at it. Then, when she gits back home, an' fines him growed sensible an' kind-hearted, she 'll be happy an' hearty ag'in."

"O Thad! do you mean go on that long visit to Virginia to see Aunt Rachel, — ma and I? I 'd like it of all things, but ma 's so afraid of the journey that she can't bear to think about it; she always says she can't do it."

"Mebbe she 'd feel diffunt while things is in the fix dey is."

"I 'll write to auntie and see what she says before I say anything to ma; but I do hope we can coax her to go."

Phœbe's face looked brighter than it had for a long time, as she ran away to tell her mother that the fire was blazing.

"'T will be a dark day to dis pore ole nigga to be lef' behine in Tennessee wid only massa an' Doc Alan," was Thad's gloomy thought. "But I 'low little missy an' me kin wuk fer dat wisit easier dan we kin build de parlor an' orfis."

CHAPTER VI.

A DISCONTENTED CRAIG.

JOHN CRAIG's discontent with his lot returned and grew greater than ever as the months rolled by, and the harvest brought him more than he could do.

"I'm beginning to hate this Chilhowee farm," thought he, standing in the midst of the rows of pulled flax, and remembering all the work required of him before it was ready for his mother's wheel. "When will holiday ever come?" There was indigo to make, the leaves were waiting for the vat; and cotton-seeds to pick out. Such work lasted far into the winter, an endless task it seemed to John.

"I wish we had n't raised such big crops; father thinks I ought to be satisfied because there 'll be some chance for me to go to college next year. I don't reckon he 'll give me the money for anything else. I would n't dare to ask for it to go travelling on, though I 've earned it. But I can't stay

here. I must see something beyond these mountains, even if I go afoot. I can 't take poor old Snip; Ken and Don and Hugh all rode out of the valley on fine horses. But when I go it 'll be different. I 'll be running away, on Shank's pony, with an empty pocket." John brooded over his plan with grim satisfaction, though he was far from happy when he thought of the distress of the family; and then, what would grandfather say?

"Of course I 'll write and tell them where I am as soon as I begin to make money. I hope it 'll be quick, so I can get a horse."

John felt that his case was hard. Hugh had left him his pony, Snip, as being too old for any more long journeys or hardships. "I 'll have to leave Snip at home, just as Hugh did. Alec 'll ride him to mill, and take care of him, and I reckon he 'll be dead before I ever come back again; and Ring, too, poor old fellow. But I 'll find a good dog somewhere."

Many things contributed to John's discontent. The sight of Alan Baird's easy life, full of pleasures, made him envious; though he would not acknowledge it even to himself, for he had been in the habit of despising Alan and his ways. Now he even envied Miles Hardy, because he drove a stage, and travelled

far into Virginia, and had wonderful adventures to boast of on his return from each trip. "But I 'd want something different, for he always goes the same road. I reckon I 'll not stop till I 've been as far as Jacob Webster went, — all the way to New Orleans. Oh! I won't know where to stop. I must see the ocean. Ken said he was bound to get a sight of it before he comes back to Chilhowee. Why, even Thad 's seen the ocean." John had often heard Thad's stories of his journeys to Charleston in the days before he came to Tennessee.

Sometimes John felt so impatient to start on the free, wandering life for which he longed, that he was almost tempted to leave the plough in the furrow, and run, just as he was, through the cedar forest, ford Silver Creek, and begin his journey. Then he would hesitate, thinking, "That would be too much like Alan." To a boy brought up like John, it was not easy to break away from home ties, especially from such a happy home as that of Chilhowee parsonage.

But he was planning, trying to save money; he had very little chance of earning any, but he knew how to tan squirrel skins, by putting them in lye, so that the hair all came off, leaving them white and pliable. He tanned them for Hugh, who liked

to cover his books with them. Now he found the hatter at the settlement would buy them at a fip apiece, but John had not much spare time for tanning. "I can never fill my pockets this way."

He learned all he could from Jacob Webster about his travels, especially by water; made him describe the steamboats on the Mississippi, and thought nothing could please him better than to travel in one. Though Mr. Webster's stories were tales of hardships and disasters, they fascinated John, and did not daunt him in the least.

But his visits to the blackmith came to a sudden end. Mr. Webster, who had been in debt ever since his two New Orleans ventures, was obliged to sell all his Chilhowee property to satisfy his creditors. He was in very great trouble over the loss of his home and business, not knowing which way to turn for a living.

Parson Craig was very anxious to help him. At this time the head man of the Indian mission visited Chilhowee parsonage, and told how he was in search of a blacksmith, a Christian man, for the mission. He was ready to offer work and wages to a suitable man.

Parson Craig at once recommended Jacob Webster as one well fitted for the place. The arrange-

ment was soon made; the blacksmith gladly accepted the offer, and went without delay to the Indian country, accompanied by his family — his wife, sister, and son.

John Craig was so much interested in the blacksmith's troubles that for the time he almost forgot his own. He was glad that he had learned so much about travelling while he had opportunity. Now he felt sure he could find the Indian country, and reach Natchez and the great river, even if he went alone.

Boating and swimming were his delight. The thought of travelling on the water reconciled him to doing without a horse. It also made him willing to wait till spring as the best time for his journey.

But he could scarcely curb his impatience. As he cut the winter's wood he thought, "This is the last time for this task." When he looked at the bare fields, he said, "I shall not drop corn here again."

He did not speak his thoughts to any one. Once he wrote in such a way to Don as to make him anxious; and Don decided to write to his father on the subject, as he had before to his grandfather.

Parson Craig was not surprised. He had been studying John. Now he read Don's letter, and discussed it with his wife. It was an anxious hour to the parents.

"When it comes to choosing whether a son of mine shall run away," said the parson, "or leave his home with a father's blessing and love, it will not take long to decide."

"No," said Mrs. Craig. "But I cannot believe John would do such a thing. It's not like our children."

"I think he intends to leave home, mother. He's different from his brothers. And here I've been trying all along to fit him into the same groove that did so well for them. I feel responsible for this result. John is a boy of strong will and great determination; and after harboring this plan for so many months, it is something that will not down at any bidding of ours, I fear. I must speak to him,—get him to show me his heart."

"Don is the only one he has ever been open with."

It was a new and surprising experience to John to be urged by his father to tell his inmost wishes to him, to speak his desires freely, with a hope that they might be gratified, though they were directly opposed to his parents' most cherished plans. He

was quite ashamed to put his rebellious thoughts into words, when he realized their love.

“You want me to go to college when I ’m sixteen, father; but oh, I can’t! I can’t do it; and it ’s just as bad to stay on the farm. This valley ’s big, the biggest in the world, some people say, but I want to get out of it; the mountains shut me in, they smother me. I ’m aching to get to the other side, to get far off.”

“How were you going to do it?”

“I thought some day I ’d—I ’d go away. I ’m such a walker, I would n’t care how far I went. I ’d walk to the Mississippi maybe; I ’m very strong. I could earn money. I ’d like to go to some place where there ’s a great deal of money, and not come back till I had my pockets full. I want to see a great many new places.”

“And you were making this plan without letting me know, because you thought I would n’t agree?”

“I did n’t believe you ’d like it at all, for I know you want me to go to college; but this journey would n’t cost you anything, I could walk and pay my way.”

“I do not doubt but that you could,” said his father, looking at John’s strong, well-knit frame

and resolute face. "But a son who has served me so long and faithfully shall not go away afoot, penniless. I can do better for you than that."

John was overjoyed, and felt that his fortune was already made. "O father! then you agree! But I can't take Snip."

"No, poor fellow, his travelling days are past, or Hugh never would have left him behind; but you can have one of the farm-horses for your holiday. You can have Nick."

"Oh! it won't be a holiday. I 'm going to hunt work, to seek my fortune; and I reckon a horse will help me mightily, specially if it 's Nick."

John was wonderfully light-hearted after his father and he had made their agreement. The sight of his son's happiness went far to reconcile Parson Craig to the new plans.

"That 's a changed boy," he said to his wife. "The thought of college must have been a woful burden to him."

"Yes, that 's plain, since he would sooner fight his own way in the world than go."

Now that he was happier, the time of preparation seemed short to John. He found a great many things to do. He made a canoe. "This is just to get my hand in," he said to Alec. "Maybe I 'll

need one in a hurry some day, and I want to be sure I can make it. I'll leave this for you to row on Lake Murray."

"When will I find time for boating? You're leaving me everything to do."

"Yes, it's your turn to grumble; only thirteen, and master of Chilhowee Farm. You're the worst off of any Craig boy yet. That comes of being the youngest."

"Well, I'd sooner be in my shoes than yours, — going away, you don't know where, nor what you'll do. Alan Baird calls it a wild-goose-chase."

"And does n't Alan wish he had just my chance, instead of sitting at home weighing powders?"

"Ken thinks it's worth while to be a doctor. I wonder you don't wait till he and Margaret get home, or till Don's holidays."

"Oh! I'm so glad father has n't asked me to. I made up my mind long ago that I could n't stay here a day after I was sixteen."

At last John started on his journey to see the world. He wore a new suit made by his mother for the occasion. In his pocket was a purse from his father containing more money than he had dared to hope for. His Uncle Will had given him a new gun.

"This is better than going to college, father," he said at parting.

"I trust you will find it so, my son."

"Always remember," said his mother, "how glad we shall be to have you home again, John."

"Yes, I know, mother; and I 'm coming back; oh, certainly. But this is a good time to go away; father agrees that I 'm old enough. Don't boys go to war when they 're sixteen?"

"You 've got as tough a battle to fight as any soldier, John," said his father.

"I 'm ready for it." John laid his hand on his gun as he rode away.

He had already taken leave of relatives and friends; so, though he saw his uncle and little Craig on the porch at Murray Hill, he only waved his hat and shouted a merry good-by as he hastened on. He passed Baird's Lane without looking up it, but presently heard shouts and footsteps. Thad came running, with a bag in his hand.

"Hold up! hold on! My, Marse John! but you is in a tearin' big hurry to git outer dis yere valley."

"I am, Thad. I don't know how to wait till I reach a road I 've never seen before."

"Nick 'll tote you dar quick enough — 'pears so."

Marse John, heah am doughnuts in dis ole mealbag. Mistis sont 'em wid her compliments — dey 's mighty tasty eatin' when folks is campin' in de woods."

"Yes, indeed, they are. Tell Mrs. Baird I 'm very much obliged. Here, hang the bag on the saddle-bow. I 'll begin to make a haul on them pretty soon."

"Cou'se you will. Mistis says to tell you 'joltin' won't hurt 'em;' but I sez, 'Sutenly 't won't, fer dey 'll not git no chance ter jolt — dey 'll go like dew, dat 's de way wid doughnuts.' Now, ain't dey tasty? I 'll tell mistis as how you begun on 'em immejit. It 'll tickle her." Then Thad drew a very small bag from his pocket. It was made of strong tow; and John knew, as soon as he saw it, that it held shot. "I made dese yere a purpose fer you, Marse John."

"It 's the best present you could make me, Thad. Bullets get used up very fast. And here 's my new gun just ready for them."

"You had orter hab de chance to use it frequent, you 're such a fus'-rate shot. Doc Alan, he 's de one fer wastin' bullets, from bein' so keen fer huntin'. His pa an' me had ter be pow'ful quiet 'bout dese yere uns, or he 'd 'a' wu'med 'em outer us, sho's you bo'n."

"Ken has been too busy to do much hunting since he began to practise."

"I 'low so; but Doc' Alan ain't him, he 's jes' his ole self come home ag'in, pesterin' fer bullets, an' pesterin' fer wood fer dat orfis fire, an' allus keepin' de wood-pile low when it 's a-burnin', so 's mistis 'mos' freezes over to de house. Dat orfis been more trouble dan profit, so fur."

"Alan said it would be the making of him if he once got it."

"He clean disremembered all about de fire-wood; him an' his pa bof, so dey says; an' de chimley's monst'us big, burns up a pile o' logs in no time; an' who 's to do de choppin' fer de extry fire? dar 's de rub. I can't squeeze it in nohow."

"Alan told me he would soon have a boy to make pills and tote wood for him."

"He done tole you dat! den he means black Sol from de ole doctor's. But he can't git de nigga widout marryin' de young mistis. Dat 'pears to be his idee now. Pore mistis an' little missy been in a pow'ful takin' on dat subjec'. Doc Alan sutenly orter build a house for his wife 'fore he fetches her home."

Thad would have been pleased to continue his tale of family woes, if he had not known John was impatient to be off.

“Well, good-by, Thad,” said John, “I ’m going to ride a long way to-day.”

Thad watched the young traveller till he was out of sight.

“Posson Craig mus’ hate ter see dat boy turnin’ his back on college, when he ’s so keen fer all his chilluns ter git book larnin’; but Marse John ’s boun’ ter be a credit to de fambly, when all ’s sayed an’ done, suten sho.”

CHAPTER VII.

CAMPING WITH THE BOATMEN.

JOHN thoroughly enjoyed his first day's journey. The beautiful world was all astir; trees budding, grass springing up, spring flowers bursting into bloom, birds at their nest-building or flying in flocks overhead, coming from the south to seek their summer homes. John found travellers on the road, going both east and west, each with a tale of bad roads and worse fording; but he did not linger, his horse was fresh, and he hurried on, only to meet others, however. Many besides himself were out seeking their fortune. "No danger of my losing the road, with so many on it."

When camping-time came he was glad to join a friendly emigrant family, and share their fire. He tethered his horse near by, and slept well with his saddle for a pillow.

John soon found, as he journeyed on, that the canebrakes were more formidable than those in Chilhowee, and the bogs deeper; he had to guide

his horse carefully where the road skirted the black masses. He had a great deal of hard climbing to do, and many steep descents, down which he had to lead his horse. The rivers were the greatest obstacles; sometimes he could not find the ford, even after wasting a long time in the search, riding up and down the bank, then how glad John was to hear a boatman's horn, or to see some experienced traveller riding up. Failing such helps, he would plunge in, and perhaps be forced to swim his horse.

There were countless creeks to cross, which were often so swollen and swift as to be like rivers. John found that he must expect a daily wetting, but he was so hardy that he did not mind that.

After several days' travel he began to watch for the boatmen that Mr. Webster had said were on the road at that time of year, coming home from New Orleans. One evening he stood on the bank of a stream, undecided whether to cross over then or wait till morning. He was ready to go into camp, having shot a wild turkey that afternoon.

As he debated, he saw several men on the other side, looking for the ford, who seemed to answer the blacksmith's description. They were very rough-looking, so black from the sun as scarcely to be

taken for white men. They were dressed in ragged suits of Kentucky jeans, and each carried a bundle tied in a ragged blanket.

"They are certainly boatmen," John decided, as he watched them cross. They put their bundles on their heads to keep them out of the water as they waded over. One of them had a gun, which he held high for safety.

"Howdy, sir," said the first as he landed. "Goin' to try the ford? It's deep wadin'. Your hoss 'll flounder, less he's mighty sure-footed."

"Powerful strong current," said the next one; "that's the worst of it."

"Better stay on this side till morning, young man," said the one with the gun. "The water's bound to lower."

"I had just decided to wait," replied John.

"Then camp right down with us. Our day's tramp's over."

John was not at all pleased with the looks of the strangers, but his eagerness to hear boating experiences made him agree to the proposal.

"We're in luck to meet you; here's a gobbler big enough to make supper for us all," said one, laying hold of the turkey which hung at John's saddle.

"Yes; it 's the finest I ever shot."

"Out on a huntin' trip, are you?"

"No; riding across country to the Mississippi."

"Don't say! Why, we 've just hailed from them parts, footin' it from New Orleans; been on the road better 'n three weeks a'ready."

"How did you get down? Are you boat-hands?"

"To be sure, nothin' else," said the man with the gun, whom the others called Pete. "We shipped on a Kentucky ark, an' worked our way down the Ohio and Mis'sip', an' now have got to walk back an' live like savages to save what little wages we earned."

"Sorry times we 've had, from first to last," said one companion.

"A dog's life could n't 'a' been worse," agreed the other.

The men made haste to light a fire, and set the turkey to roasting, while John tethered his horse.

Soon all were seated, telling their adventures as they ate their supper. The boatmen's stories revealed a very rough phase of life; but they did not discourage John, who was sure his experience would be far different.

They professed to be greatly surprised when John

told them that he was anxious to get employment on a boat.

"A youngster like you, with a good coat and fine horse, out lookin' fer work; an' boatin' of all things."

"Why, you 'll have to pay out a big part of your wages for that critter's keep. But mebbe you 'low to sell him. What 's your price?"

"I don't intend to sell him. Horses go on the boats with their owners. I know that. When my two uncles went to the war, they carried their horses with them, all the way to New Orleans."

"Ho! goin' to fight 's different. You git gov'-ment transportation then."

"This young fellow won't be at no bother with his hoss," said Pete. "The redskins 'll steal him long before he gits aboard any boat."

"Yes, siree! that 's somethin' to think of; 'fore long you 'll come to where Injuns is just swarmin', an' you 'll find them nothin' but a parcel o' thieves."

"I 've lived near Indians a long time," said John. "I 'm not afraid of them."

"Well, you 'll sing another song after you cross Buffalo River; you 'll git a chance to see real savages, an' thieves, if you never did before. They come nigh strippin' us of everything."

"Yes," agreed Pete, "only leavin' one gun amongst us. If you 've got any money about you, sir, they 'll have it or your life."

"Did they get yours?" asked John.

"Come mighty nigh it; but there was three of us, an' all fighters, — that 's what saved us. Our money was too hard come by to part with that way, — 't ain't no fortune neither; fifty dollars is poor pay for a season's hard work, but it is the most any of us got."

John soon tired of the conversation. He imagined that the men were exaggerating the dangers to alarm him. One of them even went so far as to urge him to give up his plan, and turn back with them. "You could go a good long ways with us without gittin' very fur off your trail," he said; "an' it might be the savin' of your life, who knows?"

John, having finished his supper, tried to settle himself to sleep. The men still sat by the fire, smoking their pipes and talking. John thought he had never seen such savage-looking faces.

"I don't want to have any more to do with them. I 'll get away at sun-up. I 'd sooner spend the night alone than in such company."

The men had been talking quite loudly. Pres-

ently one said in a whisper, "Now 's your time, Pete. The young chap 's off sound, he ain't stirred this good bit."

The words put John on the alert. But Pete only went over to where John's horse was tethered, and, gathering a few handfuls of grass, fed him, stroking his shoulder and patting him as he ate.

"What 's Pete's notion for making friends with my horse?" wondered John.

The fire blazed up, and revealed Pete stooping down, fumbling with the stake-rope. Instantly John was alarmed. "Untying the rope, is he? A horse-thief!" He sat up, clutching his gun.

Pete, who had been watching him, sauntered back to the fire, saying, "That hoss of your 'n 's about starved. He can't reach enough grass to give him anything like a decent feed. The stake ought to be shifted to where he 'll git a better chance."

"He 'll do for to-night," said John, who was still suspicious. He looked about, and saw that his saddle, which he had placed near him, had been carried farther off. He rose to reclaim it.

"I calculated to hang that in a tree-crotch for you," said one of the men.

"I want it for a pillow;" and John, his head on

his saddle, and his gun in his hand, felt that he was in evil case.

"If Pete had got off with my horse, the others were going to pick up my saddle and run." John shivered as he watched his three enemies seated by the fire. "Oh! I 'll have to be sure to keep awake. It won't do to let them think I 'm asleep again. They 'd try to get my money, if it was n't for my gun; they 'll steal that, too, if they get a chance. Oh! why did I camp with them? Why did I talk with them? What can I do if they steal my horse? They 'd kill me for that horse. I can see it is only my gun that keeps them from murdering me. I can tell by Pete's face."

Every moment increased John's alarm. It was a terrible ordeal. His only hope was that the men were so tired that they would not be able to outwatch him, but would presently fall asleep; then he would make his escape as quickly as possible.

He watched and listened. "They are talking to try to keep themselves awake," thought he. Then came silence. "They want to give me a chance to go to sleep." He saw them nodding, so overcome that it seemed as if they might fall from the log on which they sat, into the fire. At last the three lay

prostrate, each one snoring so loudly that John felt sure his footsteps could not be heard.

Then John rose, and quickly hastened to his horse. He knew how terror had taken hold on him when he found his hands trembling so that he could scarcely fasten the saddle-girth. "But I must do it, for we 'll have a long, quick ride before we 're safe. Oh! if I could only have got Pete's gun. But he never let go of it, sound asleep as he was."

The danger was by no means over, even after John had mounted his horse; for Nick's footsteps could not be muffled, and the formidable stream was to be crossed. How he wished he had forded it in the day-time, instead of waiting.

The camp was very near the water. How terrible if the sleepers should wake before the crossing was over. John guided his horse down the bluff, his heart quaking as he crushed the twigs, and stumbled on the stones. How loud every motion sounded! what a terrible swish the water made as they plunged into it! The moon lighted them; and they got safely over, though with much floundering. As John urged his horse up the bank on the other side, he heard the dreaded voices, a fearful sound, angry shouts and imprecations, urging, commanding him

to stop. Then a bullet whizzed past, and buried itself in a tree-trunk a few paces off.

Now he had reached the road; he saw it plain in the moonlight; his horse flew over it; he heard the crash of the next bullet, but he was beyond it. What an escape! But was he safe? Surely his pursuers would cross over and follow him; they were swift-footed, some men were as fleet as deer, and his horse and outfit were much coveted prizes; so John sped on over the moonlit trading-path, listening for the terrible bullet, and dreading to meet some pitfall which would cause him to become a prey to his enemies, who knew the way, while it was strange to him.

For some distance the road was wide and straight, easy for the horse; easy too, for the three men to follow. John shivered when he thought what a plain target he was for Pete's gun in the bright moonlight. He was so sure they were following that he did not stop to listen for their footsteps; he felt that he had no time to lose.

Presently a bend in the road brought him into the midst of a tall forest. Tree-branches interlaced across his path, scarcely a moonbeam could struggle through. His way was as dark before him as if he had been in the cedar forest in Chilhowee. Still

he hastened on. Then came a break, caused by a creek; without a pause horse and rider plunged down the steep bank and into the water, which, fortunately was not deep. But the bed was very rocky; the horse caught his feet among the sharp stones, and had a hard struggle to pull free. "What if Nick loses a shoe?" thought John.

At last they were over. But now came a rough, winding road,—cliffs on one side, steep slopes on the other. "Here 's a gully to slip into! No more night rides for me, I hope." He remembered the tales his brothers and Alan had told him of Mr. Yost's gully, and guided his horse carefully. "There 'd be nobody to save me if I got to the bottom." Did not he hear savage roars? Dangers were multiplying, and he obliged to go at a snail's pace.

After travelling in this way for what seemed a long time, he came to a more open place, where the moon again shone brightly. He took courage till he heard rushing water, and saw that here was another stream to cross. John, resolved not to let any obstacle stop him, brought Nick to the brink. Once there the animal, hitherto so easily guided, refused to go any farther; no urging could make him step into the water. John, angry at the poor beast, struck him sharply with his whip, but

with no avail. "Only a dumb creature could be so stubborn, keeping me on this side when my life 's in danger."

He was forced to turn back, and climb the bank again. The horse went willingly enough when once away from the water. He spent the rest of the night in a thicket a little off the road. At daylight the sound of rushing water made him know which way to turn. Soon he stood on the bank of the stream which his horse had refused to cross in the dark. He found it deep and dangerous. "We could never have got over in the night. Nick was wiser than I. This is one of the rivers the boatmen told me about, to try to frighten me."

Now he began to think of breakfast. He watched for game, and soon shot a partridge. Then he wanted a fire without the trouble of lighting it. He rode on till he found a deserted camp, where the fire still smouldered. There he broiled the partridge, and fed his horse with almost the last handful of corn in his bag.

In that day's journey John met several companies of boatmen, but his recent experience made him wish to avoid them. "What savages they seem to be! No use talking to such men. I heard all I want to know, and more, from that set yesterday."

Some of them looked so much like his dreaded enemies that John's heart quaked at first sight, fearing that after all here was Pete. He rode as fast as the difficulties of the way permitted, and did not make friends even with peaceable-looking emigrants going his way. "I don't feel like trusting anybody. I reckon I 'll try how camping alone works to-night."

CHAPTER VIII.

ALONE IN THE WILDS.

EARLY in the afternoon John's horse began to flag, and, unless urged on, stopped continually to crop the wayside grass.

"Tired from last night, and hungry as can be. That 's the way I feel too," said John. "I 'd better choose a camping-ground before Nick gives out altogether. I wish I could come across another fine turkey like yesterday's; I'd make sure of getting some good of it myself this time."

He looked about till he found a spot that pleased him. There was a fine spring, and a clear little creek with fish, and plenty of wood on the ground ready for his fire, dry as tinder. "There was a hurricane here long ago," was his thought as he looked at the fallen logs, rotten from age. Not far off was a canebrake and a great swamp. "It would n't do to ride about here after night, but these canes 'll make a feast for Nick."

He cut a great armful of the young sweet cane

which was everywhere springing up on the edge of the brake.

While the horse ate his supper, John fished for his, using a dry cane for a rod.

The cane in the brake grew twenty to thirty feet high, and stood so close that a man could not walk amongst it, except where a fallen tree had made a way; but wild animals crept into its depths, and haunted it both day and night. John, who thought he knew all about canebrakes, did not feel afraid to stay near one, even at night, with a good fire between him and it.

While his fish broiled he parched a handful of corn, the last he had in his bag. He was glad he had not fed it to Nick, for fish alone would not have satisfied his hunger.

"I must be on the lookout for some settler that has corn to spare. It goes very well with fish. I could n't have done without it to-night. It's different with turkey. I can make believe the breast is bread."

After supper he lay upon the grass with great content, well satisfied to be camping alone, and tired enough to be glad to have a long night's rest in prospect. "This fire will last, certainly. I don't know how many trees I've got burning here,

big ones too, and lots more ready to catch when the blaze reaches them. This is as big as any bonfire Don ever built when Uncle Will and Ken cleared the farm, and here was the wood all ready to my hand. I hardly had to lift a stick. Nick and I can't be harmed by anything that 's in the canebrake to-night." The fire seemed like a merry thing, sparkling and crackling, the blaze leaping up in great tongues. It fascinated John. All around were fascinations,—the bright rippling brook, the great trees in their green freshness, full of singing-birds seeking their nests. With Nick only a few paces off, and his gun beside him, he did not feel lonely nor afraid; but as he lay there in the gathering twilight, he thought, "I'd like it if Hugh or Don was here now, so I could tell them how dreadful last night was; but I reckon I 'd be too sleepy to talk long."

As John slept he had a frightful dream. In it Pete came riding up on Nick, with John's gun; behind him were all the other boatmen that he had met on the road, dozens of them, each mounted; they fired at him, he heard the shots, a great volume it seemed; the flash of the powder nearly blinded him, and their horses stamped as if they had gone mad. John tried to escape, and the effort

woke him. In a moment the dream was made plain. The canebrake was on fire; it was the exploding cane that sounded like guns, while Nick, frightened by the blaze and noise, was stamping furiously, and tugging at his stake-rope for freedom.

John sprang up and ran to him. "He 'll break loose and run, — fall over some cliff, — sink in the bog — O Nick! what would ever become of me if I lost you?" It was as much as he could do to soothe and coax his horse into quiet. The scene was frightful enough to John, who understood it; what must it be to poor unreasoning Nick?

"We must get away from this before it comes any closer; a few puffs of wind this way, and the blaze will scorch us. I never thought of my fire spreading so."

He saddled Nick; but when he turned from the fire he did not know which way to go, remembering the frightful holes and rocks which he had passed as he looked for his camping-ground.

"It 'll take daylight to help me find the road again. I 'm caught in the woods, and can't get out. It must be a very dark night. It 's black as pitch except where the blaze lights it."

He retreated as far as he dared, and then sat on his trembling horse watching the grand sight. The

brake seemed one mass of flame; some tall trees were blazing. "Pillars of fire, pillars of smoke—oh, I wish our boys were here to see this! What a racket that canebrake makes!—worse than when Uncle Will burned ours, a great deal worse. Oh, how the fire 's spreading!—but not this way, that 's the good thing about it. It 's only the wind that saves us. Poor Nick! hold still, old fellow; you can't move without maybe breaking your leg. Oh! when will morning come? What will ever stop this blaze?"

John watched the fire closely and anxiously; if it came any nearer he would have to run at all hazards.

But now came something even more frightful than the fire. The wild animals which lived in the canebrake were escaping from their burning home. In the bright light John saw them running; he heard their loud yells. Now he as well as Nick was terror-stricken. "Oh! what will become of me?" It was no use to climb a tree for refuge, even if he could leave Nick; for his new enemies, the bears, panthers, wild-cats, snakes, could follow him there. But he must escape; some of the dreadful creatures were coming directly towards him! Nick should gallop away, even if the

next turn carried him over a precipice. "Come, Nick, we 'll go;" but at the moment of starting he saw, to his great surprise and relief, that the wild creatures had no eyes for him, but kept straight on in their flight till the forest hid them.

"Ah! we 're safe so near the fire. They 're too frightened to hurt us. They 'll hide in the dark woods, and be ready to pounce on us. Nick, you and I will have to stay here till morning, whether or no."

John's eyes and ears were so much engrossed by the fire and its accompanying incidents that he failed to see that great clouds had gathered; lightning flashed and thunder muttered. He knew nothing about the new danger till the storm broke in all its fury, — a torrent of rain, thunder that hushed all other sounds, lightning that blinded him more than the fire had. John bowed his head, and clung to poor Nick; the tall trees bent and creaked in the tempest, and seemed ready to fall upon him. He had no refuge. The rain quenched the fire, so that when the lightning ceased it was very dark.

"I am glad I waited till father agreed that I might come away from home, and that he said, 'God bless you,'" thought John, in those dreary, waiting hours, remembering his safe and happy home.

One of his father's texts, too, came into his mind: "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee." "In six troubles and also in seven!" He had not understood it in the least when his father preached his sermon, but now he thought he did. How many perils he had been in, in the short time since he had met the first boatmen. In the desolate forest John Craig uttered his first truly earnest and thankful prayer to the One who had delivered him.

At daybreak the rain ceased, and John was able to find his way to the road. The little creek in which he had fished was so swollen that he scarcely knew it. "This rain will make hard fording to-day. But it put out my great fire, so I can't complain; though with everything so wet I reckon it 'll not be easy to light another, or to find that turkey I want for my breakfast."

He rode a long distance, and crossed several creeks, and began to feel very hungry. "I started so early that nothing 's stirring." He came very near being homesick as he hurried on half famished. "I reckon Bessie 's slicing the pone to toast, and mother 's frying bacon and eggs; or maybe Thad 's brought us some bear-steak, and Alec 's done the milking, and fetched up the butter from the spring-house

— Ring 's limping after him, wondering where I am. I left Alec plenty to do. But he need n't mind ; for as soon as ever I begin to make money, I 'll send him some right away. I 'm glad I 'll have a chance to do it, but I never thought I 'd be in such a fix as this."

Things looked more cheerful after the sun rose. "Now maybe I 'll hear a turkey gobbling, and find some dry wood for a fire."

John saw smoke curling up from among the trees. "There 's a camp! I wonder if it 's boatmen." Soon he saw two horses and a cow, hobbled, cropping grass near the road. "It 's a party of emigrants ; boatmen don't have cows." And he rode into the woods with the smoke for a guide.

A covered wagon stood among the trees. "Movers," thought John. A little farther on he found a family group beside a fire, the man broiling venison, the woman mixing hoecake in a wooden bowl, two little boys petting a dog, and drinking milk out of pewter cups.

John received a cordial welcome from the strangers, and an invitation to breakfast. He thought food had never tasted so good before ; certainly he had never been so hungry. The family listened with interest to his tale of adventures and mishaps.

"I 'm glad we were too far off to be disturbed by your great fire," said Mr. Ford.

"Or to have the worst of your storm," said his wife. "We had some rain, but we made out to keep dry in the wagon."

"My camp was a long way from here," said John. "I started off with the first streak of dawn, and have been riding ever since, till I was so hungry that I don't know what would have become of me if you had n't been so kind."

"It 's good to see somebody that 's got a relish for his victuals," said Mr. Ford. "I was in hopes travelling would be a help that way to our folks, but it has n't, so far."

"No, it 's a weary journey," agreed his wife.

John had noticed that his hosts had little appetite for the food which he so much enjoyed, and that the children, though urged by their parents, would not eat, but threw the savory venison to the dog. The whole family had the appearance of having been very ill.

"You 've come from a fever-and-ague district, have n't you?" asked John.

"No," said Mr. Ford; "we 've been living on a milk-sick farm."

"Oh! that 's worse."

"Yes, as bad as could be; and no way to mend matters except by getting up and coming away."

"Did you all get it?"

"Yes, every one; my brother-in-law died of it, and all my cows. A neighbor gave me this fresh cow just as I was coming away, thinking maybe to save the children's lives."

"I 've heard father say it 's very hard to get well of milk-sickness," said John, "because nobody knows what to do for it."

"No, nor what makes it. It 's something the cows eat; but what it is, or where it grows, is a big mystery; I could n't find out, for all my trying. I hated mighty bad to give up my place, for it was a very fine farm. But when the milk-sick disease took hold, it drove us off."

"I 'm afraid we 'll never have as good a home again," said Mrs. Ford.

"We had done a great deal to make it comfortable, worked very hard; but life is worth more than anything else when it comes to the choosing."

"Did you sell your place?"

"Sell it? no," said Mr. Ford. "Who would buy it, with such danger on it?"

"There is a farm of rich land not many miles from us, where the people suffered from milk-sickness, so

that the owner was willing to sell it very cheap to get rid of it. A stranger bought it,—a Scotchman, just come to Chilhowee. He said he was n't afraid of milk-sickness; he thought he could cure the land of it. He 's living on it now."

"Well, if he finds out how to do that I 'd certainly like to hear from him, but I 'm afraid there 's no cure; he 's just risking his life on an experiment, or for a bargain."

"So father says; he 's afraid Mr. Campbell 's made a mistake. My brother 's gone East to finish his medical studies; and father has asked him to find out all he can about the milk-sick disease, for the sake of the Campbells."

"It would be a grand thing if he could learn how to rid the land of such a danger," said Mrs. Ford, "before it ruins other families." She and her husband seemed really to be cheered by John's account, and to hope that they might some time return safely to their abandoned farm, since Dr. Kenneth Craig was going to make a study of milk-sickness for the sake of Tennessee. For the present Mr. Ford was taking his family to his father's home in Alabama. John kept with them for the three days their roads lay together. It was slow travelling; but he enjoyed it, because he found he could be helpful in the milk-

ing, in harnessing the horses, in driving the wagon or the cow. He lent his horse to Mr. Ford, or he gave the little boys turns in riding behind him on Nick, to their great delight. He brought the wood for the fire, or provided the game. He cheered the long evenings with stories of Chilhowee, of his father and brothers, of Grandfather Craig. He did not know there was so much to tell, and now it seemed as if he could never finish.

"I don't know how we can do without you," said Mrs. Ford, when it came to parting.

"I wish you were going the rest of the way with us," said Mr. Ford.

"I wish you were safe home at your father's," said Mrs. Ford, "instead of plunging into no knowing how many new dangers."

"Better wish me safe on a Mississippi boat, Mrs. Ford. I 'm half-way there, and I 've got on my seven-league boots; I can't stop nor turn back."

Mr. Ford filled John's bag with corn and meal, insisting that his supply was much greater than was needed for the rest of their journey.

"Travelling 's beginning to do you all good, I think," said John; for his friends looked brighter and better than when he first met them.

"You 've given me many a rest," said Mr. Ford.

"You 've made me think of other things besides my troubles," said Mrs. Ford.

"Father and mother are the ones to help people that way; I don't know how."

So they parted; John keeping straight on in his road, his friends waiting till the distance hid him, before turning their horses southward.

"I don't see how that boy's mother can spare him," said Mrs. Ford.

"I don't see how she could keep him any longer. A boy like that must get out of the home nest, and make his way in the world, even if it takes fighting."

CHAPTER IX.

SUNDAY WITH THE INDIANS.

JOHN's horse was rested and well fed, and carried him bravely, till at last they reached Buffalo River. Mr. Webster had told him how difficult it was to ford, and that after crossing it he would be in the country of the Chickasaws.

"A new tribe of Indians will be something worth seeing," thought he. "I 'm about tired of Cherokees; it seems as if I had been looking at them all my life."

He still met returning boatmen, but they no longer interested him; he did not intend to be like them, even if he was employed on a boat. Now he was on the lookout for Chickasaws. Soon he passed several on the road, — quiet-looking men, each wrapped in a blanket, paying no heed to John, but going straight on.

"They see me, for all they pretend not to look; they 've got sharper eyes than white men, and find out things quicker."

John thought of Ahila; these did not please him as he had. "But Ahila is a chief, and a learned man; these are nothing but poor Indians. I reckon I 'll see some braves dressed in paint and feathers before long."

He saw their little huts, made of saplings, mud-plastered, a few having fruit-trees around them. Children played on the grass before the doors. "Ha! the papposes like to do just what white children do," as they chased a dog round the house. When they saw John they stopped, and stood watching him till he was out of sight.

"I 've heard father say that very few Indian houses are fit to sleep in, so I reckon I 'll camp alone to-night somewhere in the woods."

But one of John's most cherished desires had been to live in an Indian wigwam; and so, when the evening proved to be very rainy, making the lighting of a fire or finding game almost impossible, he thought now was the time if ever to get a taste of such life. "It 'll be better, I 'm sure, than sitting on my horse in the rain all night, with nothing to eat except some jerked venison that Mrs. Ford gave me."

It was Saturday evening, and almost dark, when he came to a hut with a fire in front of it, over

which a man was bending. "An Indian trying to cook his supper in the rain; he's got more smoke than blaze."

On seeing John the man came forward, speaking some words in a strange tongue, and making signs, evidently inviting him to dismount. He helped him to hobble his horse, gave him a piece of venison from the fire, and spread a bear-skin on the floor of the hut for his guest's bed, where John lay watching his host from the open door-way. He caught glimpses of the Indian's form and features in the fitful blaze. "I don't like his looks. What's he staying outside for? Got some designs on Nick maybe. An Indian always wants a horse." He was relieved when the man sat down in the shelter of the wall, and began to eat his supper. "Been hunting, and not had anything to eat all day, I reckon; that's the way an Indian lives."

His weapons hung on the wall,—bows, sheaths of arrows, a tomahawk, a musket; when the fire brightened John saw them, and also horns and skins of animals.

"I reckon I ought to watch that man till he comes in and gets to sleep, for fear he'll make off with Nick; a horse gives no end of anxiety, especially if he's a good one; that's what Uncle Will said."

But tired John fell asleep while his host was still feasting on his venison steak.

When he awoke the sun was streaming into the room, of which John was sole occupant. A deer-skin spread on the floor indicated where the Indian had slept. A few charred sticks showed where last night's fire had been.

"That man was half the night eating his supper; he won't be hungry till sundown. I'll get no breakfast by staying here, so I'd best saddle and be off; I'm glad to see Nick's still on hand."

As he was mounting his horse, the Indian suddenly appeared. John was surprised, not having heard or seen his approach. "I wish I'd got off," thought John; "he's too stealthy to suit me."

He mounted; but the Indian laid his hand on the bridle, and began to lead the horse towards a group of huts that could be seen in the distance.

John was greatly alarmed. "I'm a prisoner! He's going to deliver me up to his tribe — and I trusted him — oh, I must break away! Where can I go? I'm in their country!"

When he tried to free himself, the Indian seemed the more determined to hold on. "He'll have a lot of warriors here in full chase if I run."

Even Nick seemed to have failed him, and was

obedient to his captor's hand. "He must have bewitched him in the night somehow, while I slept." Brave-hearted John felt terrified and hopeless as the Indian hurried him on.

When they came to the village the street was full of people, braves and squaws and papposes, all looking at John. The Indian led Nick up to the eldest man, the chief, who held out his hand. John held out his, and they shook hands.

John could not have explained why he was not at all frightened after that, but it was a fact. The old chief said "Ugh," and some in the crowd said "Ugh," and everybody walked down the street away from the houses. John went with them, though his Indian no longer held the bridle. He wanted to see what would happen next.

They had not gone far before they came to a beautiful grove, in the shade of which were some fallen logs; on these the Indians seated themselves. The old chief stood facing them.

Now John understood; all the events of the morning were clear to him. Oh what a glorious thing was Sunday and God's service! He felt as safe and peaceful here in this woodland temple as in Chilhowee Church.

But what were they waiting for, the people all

silent, the chief standing like a statue? Then he saw a horseman coming towards them, not from the village, but from the opposite direction. As he dismounted, and stood beside the old chief, who began at once to talk to him, John thought of Ahila; for the newcomer was young and bright-faced, and commanding in appearance. "A young brave, a Chickasaw chief. I wish I could speak his language as I can the Cherokee."

Then the young chief approached John, and, to his surprise, spoke to him in English, explaining that the white missionary, who taught them about the Great Father, would not come again till the next moon, but had sent him from the mission-school to help the chief and his people to praise God. They were glad to have the young white brave with them; and they would now sing "Coronation," which they had learned in their own tongue.

The Indians sang the beautiful words, and so did John, in English. "All hail the power of Jesus' name" was his mother's favorite hymn; he wondered if she was singing it that morning in church.

John had a fine voice and a pleasing face. Every eye in that Indian congregation was fixed on him as he stood beside the two chiefs, singing out of the joy and gladness of his heart.

The service was earnest; the two leaders spoke and prayed in their own language, and had most attentive listeners. John was expecting the last hymn, when the young chief, at the suggestion of the older one, turned to him with the request that the young white brave would speak a few words.

John Craig was never willing to admit that he could not do everything that was expected of him, so great was his ambition. But here was something quite unthought of; yet why should n't he talk to these Indians? his father and Hugh had just such listeners. Ah! he would tell them about their work.

The young chief interpreted the story, which was listened to with rapt attention. John saw that the name of God-man Craig was pleasant to them, as if they had heard it before, and loved it; which, indeed, he found was the case. The fame of his father's good work for Indians had spread even to this distant nation.

After church many of the people expressed their thanks to John in their own strange fashion. He was their friend because he was the son of God-man Craig. "I shall never be afraid of Indians again," thought John, highly gratified at the attention he received. Even his host of last night, to whom he

had taken a dislike, pleased him, now that he found his heart was better than his face.

John dined with the chiefs, and found through the interpreter that the old one was very wise; and yet he seemed pleased with John, and evidently liked to listen to him, which was very gratifying.

In the afternoon the interpreter rode away to hold service in another village; but John stayed with his new friends till the next morning, learning what he could of Indian life, about which he had great curiosity.

On Monday at sunrise his journey began again. And at last, after many hardships and hinderances, the young traveller reached the banks of the Mississippi.

How John's heart leaped up at the sight of the majestic river! The city of Memphis did not gratify him so much; for he looked forward to seeing larger and more famous cities, as Natchez, and especially New Orleans. But never in his life could he expect to see a river greater than the Mississippi, the Father of Waters.

A wonderful scene was spread out before John's eyes as he stood on the levee. He had longed to see a steamboat; and here they were, so grand, so commodious, making travel a luxury. And here

were flat-boats, like those poor Jacob Webster tried to make his fortune in; and here were barges, and arks — Kentucky boats Mr. Webster called them.

What loads they carried, — men, women, and children. “Emigrants,” thought John; “that ’s the best way to go. They ’ve got lots of horses aboard, so I ’ll have no trouble about taking Nick. Some of them must be filled with chickens, by the crowing that ’s going on.”

It was a noisy place, that river-front, which made it all the more enjoyable to John. The winding of the boatmen’s horns was music to him; even the tin trumpets charmed him. “Oh! I must find a place and get started; it looks as if it ’s just the kind of life I ’d like.”

Many of the boats were ploughing up or down the river; others were moored, waiting for their time of starting. John boarded a number of these in search of an engagement. He found that they carried all sorts of cargoes, — emigrants, horses and cattle, ploughs, millstones, grindstones, grain, poultry. “I don’t want to go on a chicken-boat,” thought John; “that would be too much like our own yard at home.”

Some of the arks carried merchandise, as muslins, dress-goods, shawls, laces, to sell in the towns and

villages which the boat would pass. They had counters for displaying their wares. When John saw this sight, so novel to him, he thought that above all things he should like to be employed in such work; and greatly to his joy he succeeded in forming an engagement on the boat he had chosen, the captain being attracted by his bright face and pleasing manners.

John insisted on taking Nick along, though paying for him considerably reduced his wages. "But that does n't matter much," thought he; "for this boat 's going to carry me to where I 'll soon get bigger pay."

Before he started he wrote a letter to his father, as he had promised, telling of his success, and giving a sketch of his journey. His time was short; he had no sooner despatched his letter than they were off. At last John was afloat on the Mississippi.

CHAPTER X.

NEW WAYS IN CHILHOWEE.

MRS. BAIRD and Phœbe were riding to Chilhowee Parsonage under Thad 's escort. They took the road over Silver Bottom.

"See what a fine cornfield Mr. Craig has," said Mrs. Baird.

"Posson 's co'n, doin' pow'ful well dis season, fer all Marse John 's not heah to wuk it."

"Mrs. Craig says they 're looking for a fine harvest; they 've got a good field-hand."

"Dat dey has. Marse Will done pick him out, an' he knows what 's what 'bout farmin', sut-enly."

"There 's Alec down in the field now," said Phœbe.

"Gatherin' roastin'-ears fer dinner, I declar'; dat ar' co'n 's a heap forwarder dan our'n; an' dar 's Jim Crow pickin' at it like a good fellow."

Alec came running to greet his friends, with Sport at his heels.

"Have you got any more letters from John?" asked Mrs. Baird.

"Not since he started down the river; but he 's all right, I reckon. He said he was n't looking for any more trouble, now he 'd got on such a first-rate boat."

"Are n't you lonesome 'way off here without him?" asked Phœbe.

"How could I be with my dog and pony?"

"An' dat ar' crow," said Thad.

"Yes. Here, Jim Crow!" At the call the crow came hopping towards them, and ate a grain of the green corn out of his master's hand. "See how tame he is."

"You 're teaching him to be a big glutton," said Phœbe.

"He 's welcome to every grain he eats, for he 's such good company."

"You 've larnt him lots o' trick, I 'low."

"Yes; and he learns very fast. He 'll soon know how to do everything but talk, I reckon."

"Dar 's one piece o' mischief you mus' be mighty keerful not to let him git inter his head, 'less you wanter say good-by to him."

"What 's that?" asked Alec.

"Why, carryin' coals in his bill."

"Oh! a crow could n't do that."

"Yes, dey kin be teached to do it. I knowed a crow oncet dat if you 'd say to him, 'Jim, tote a coal heah fer my pipe,' he 'd make straight fer de chimley place, an' come hoppin' back, or mebbe flyin', wid de coal in his bill."

"Oh! not a live coal, Thad!" said Phœbe.

"Yes, 't wuz. 'T would be 'mos' gone to ashes, prob'ly; but it could be blowed to life again, 'nough to light a pipe. I seen it done myself. But de pore bird paid dear fer bein' so smart. It cost him his life. Dey had ter shoot him fer fear he 'd set de house afire, droppin' coals around."

"What a pity! They could n't break him of it, I reckon."

"No, Marse Alec. You can't unlarn a crow. So you be keerful wid Jim."

"He sha'n't learn to carry coals and get shot for it, that 's certain."

"I wonder you don't lose him," said Mrs. Baird.

"Some nights I think he 's gone, for he always chooses a new place to sleep in, never the same roost twice; but he answers when I call him. I don't go to bed till I know where Jim is."

"De critter 's safe 'nough widout somebody picks him off wid his gun."

"Well, I 'm glad Alan 's gone. It 's his gun I 'm afraid of."

"Alan 's coming back," said Phoebe.

Alec, with his bag full of roasting-ears, rode home with the guests.

Ring, sunning himself on the porch, roused up at sound of the horses' feet, and limped down to the gate to gaze at the visitors. "Dat pore ole feller 's los' his bark at las'," said Thad; "he ain't got a word to say to us."

"All he 's thinking of is how to get down to Silver; that 's what John used to say."

"He wants a drink outer Silver mighty bad, looks so. But he would n't never git dar wid dat stiff back an' dem shaky legs."

"No; but he 'd try to, and get lost in the woods, if he could once get out of the gate. And it keeps Bessie and me all the time thinking about keeping it shut, for the last thing John said was to take good care of Ring."

"He told me how sorry he was to leave his old dog behind," said Mrs. Baird.

"Yes; he 's called Ring his ever since Don gave Sport to me."

"But you like birds better than dogs," said Phoebe.

"Yes, birds are my pets. And there are more than ever here this summer, — swallows and blue-birds and wrens and robins, and a great many more I don't know. Father says the next time he 's home long enough to spare me for a few days, he 'll let me go to Willowdale to see Dr. Temple, and learn about birds; that 's the kind of holiday I 'd like."

Alec rode with Thad to stable the horses. "Chucky Jack and Meg heah! how be dat?" said Thad, as they entered the door.

"Uncle Will's folks have come to dinner. Mother thought it would cheer Mrs. Baird to see a houseful of people."

"So 't will. Mistis jes' fai'ly dotes on dem little chilluns o' Marse Will's an' Mis' Janet's."

"Well, Craig and Marjorie are both here."

"Dey 'll make mistis 'mos' forget herself fer de time bein'. Pore mistis, she been mighty down in de mouth heah lately."

Alec knew that Mrs. Baird's woe was caused by the fact that Alan was about to be married, and thought, "It 's different from our folks; why, we were all as happy as could be when Ken got married."

But Mrs. Baird looked her brightest when she met her friends.

“Ah, Mrs. Craig! you knew how to please a lonely woman. Look at these little folks, Phœbe. They ’re for all the world like Bessie and Alec when we first came to Tennessee; don’t you think so, Janet? Just the same ages, and such fair, beautiful children. O Janet! you ’re a happy woman.”

She prevailed on baby Marjorie to come to her, and amused herself with the child, and with watching little Craig, whom Bessie and Phœbe were entertaining, and, as Thad said, forgot herself while Mrs. Craig and Janet were busy.

But she could not long banish her woes, and the dinner talk was of them.

“Oh, Mr. Will!” she said, “if Alan had only chosen a wife that I could love as I do Janet, how happy I might be.”

“Why can’t you hope it, Mrs. Baird? From all accounts Miss Nettie is a lovely girl. Ken has seen her. He tells me she is very pretty.”

“But so young, Mr. Will. A silly little girl, that ’s the way I can’t help thinking of her.”

“Is n’t she eighteen? If I could have seen my way clear, I should have married Janet before she was a day older than that. But you ’re asking too much to want a daughter-in-law such as Janet; the like of her is not to be found.”

Janet smiled in her pride and joy. "I am indeed a happy woman, Mrs. Baird."

"I suppose I should not object on account of Nettie's age; for is n't little Alice Murray to be married as young, even younger?"

"Yes, her father has given his consent; they will only delay till Ken and Margaret get home. Dr. Pratt has waited so long, you know."

"We cannot think of our Alice as a child, though she is but seventeen," said Mrs. Craig. "Why, she was a little woman all through the war, her mother's companion and comfort."

"And showed more bravery and wisdom than Sister Emma, according to all accounts," said Uncle Will.

"I remember she sometimes put me to shame," said Mrs. Baird. "I was a great coward in those days; Phoebe was my help then as well as now."

"In what days were you not a coward?" thought Uncle Will. But he pitied Mrs. Baird, and had none but kind words for her.

"You won't let me comfort you, ma," said Phoebe, "as Alice does her mother."

"Well, child, it 's because things are past comfort when I 'm so disappointed in Alan."

"I think you might be thankful that Alan is marrying so well," said Janet.

“A rich wife, you mean? Well, that does please us all. Alan and his pa are quite carried away with it, and think I ’m just fretting about trifles. But things are so different from the way Alan always said they would be. This year, when he was practising medicine at home, he often said it was only to get his hand in to please Dr. Thompson. But when he was married he ’d be in partnership with the old doctor, and live in Eastboro in grand style. And so he would n’t give a thought to building a house for himself, as his pa and I wanted him to do; and now, after being up there these six weeks, and losing his patients here, he writes that he ’s going to be married in a few days, and coming home to begin practice again; and I ’m so sick of that office and his medicines. And all the trouble ’s to begin again; and here ’s his bride coming, and no place to put her.”

“You are in trouble, Mrs. Baird,” said Mrs. Craig.

“Oh, dear! how I wish that house was built, down at the end of the lane; his pa offered him as much ground as he wanted, but Alan would n’t listen to it because it was in timber; he never helped at any clearing, and he won’t begin now. And his bride being rich seems to make it just that much worse to me; for she knows what style is, and so do I,

coming from one of the first families of Virginia. But husband lost his ambition long ago, and stopped making improvements, did n't even build Phœbe's parlor." Poor Mrs. Baird fairly broke down and sobbed at the thought of Phœbe's privations as well as her own.

"Never mind, ma; I don't care for the parlor so much since you and pa have agreed to let me make that visit to Aunt Rachel in Virginia."

"Why, Phœbe, that will be ever such a pleasant thing for you," said Janet. "I 'm glad to hear it."

"Oh! I don't think I can let her go, Janet. Why, she was never away from me a night in her life."

"Well, ma, you can go along, if you can't part with me; that 's what I want, of all things."

"Think what the child 's asking of me! Mrs. Craig, you know what a hardship it was to me to cross the mountains coming here. You remember that journey, Janet, and you, too, Mr. Will? Why, I nearly lost my wits many a time from fright. And now Phœbe wants me to go travelling just for pleasure."

"But not this good while, ma. I don't want to go till after Alice is married. We 've been to-

gether ever since we came to the valley, and we're just of an age. Oh! I must stay to the wedding."

"To be sure you must," said Uncle Will. "And by that time, Mrs. Baird, you may find an easier way of getting out of the valley than the way you came in. I'd advise you to go by Miles Hardy's stage."

"Would you really? Husband and Alan both say he makes a good stage-driver."

"Excellent! He's a first-rate hand at managing horses, and he's strong as an ox himself, so that he can pull the stage out of many a tight place single-handed; and he's so in love with his work that he'll make himself famous in it. Really, he seems to have found his vocation."

"Now, ma, I think you ought to promise to go, after all Mr. Will says."

"It does seem as if you might be brave enough for such a trip," said Mrs. Craig. "Think of the pleasure it will give Phœbe."

"And Aunt Rachel. You ought to see the letters she writes, Mrs. Craig."

"I don't believe I can ever bring my mind to it. Anyhow, Alan's wedding's too big a trouble to give me a chance to think about it now. Alan can't get over it that his pa did n't manage to buy Neigh-

bor Hendricks's new stone house, instead of letting it fall into the hands of a Yankee. Then we would have had the finest house in the neighborhood — just the thing for Nettie. It went for almost nothing, you know."

"Yes, I recollect poor Hendricks had to sell it for debt," said Uncle Will. "He could n't get enough off the farm to pay for building the house; and no wonder, for he had allowed the ground to get wofully out of order. He had managed the rolling land so that it was washed into deep gullies, and was useless to him. But see what Mr. Whitney's done. I don't call him a Yankee, but a bright New Englander; he has repaired the fences, and put brush into the gullies, and spread earth on the brush, and sowed grass and clover on the new ground, and restored it to usefulness, besides improving the appearance very much."

"Yes, it makes Alan dreadfully covetous. He's quite provoked at his pa for not trying to get it when it was for sale; but nobody knew then that he'd have a rich wife that could sometime pay for it. Alan says he reckons he could have raised the money himself somehow, for with such a house and location he'd soon get a fine practice. But it's like spilt milk to us, not worth while to cry for it."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Craig; "and, besides, Alan and his father could never have done what Mr. Whitney did; every one agrees that it was a great task."

"Yes, tremendous work," said Uncle Will. "I admire his pluck and perseverance."

"Of course, husband could n't do much with only Thad to help, and Alan can't turn farmer after studying to be a physician. He says he would have kept the place just as it was; it would have done for a hunting-ground."

"Then we should have lost this fine specimen of New England thrift and ingenuity," said Uncle Will. "I like Mr. Whitney's farming; I've learned many a lesson from him."

"Of course his farming 's all very well, and I see you won't call him a Yankee; but we do, especially since he 's taken to broom-making. We think that rather queer; it 's made a good deal of talk in the neighborhood. We don't think it becoming for a white man to raise broom-corn, and make brooms to sell in town and in the country wherever he can; that kind of work is usually left to the negroes."

"I believe he makes excellent brooms," said Janet. "I've heard them much praised."

"Thad 's afraid he 'll lose his customers," said

Phoebe. "He says it makes him feel mighty poor to think of it."

"Thad fairly dotes on the little bit of pocket-money he gets from his brooms," said Thad's mistress.

"Tell him I 'll still buy from him," said Mrs. Craig. "I like his brooms; he must make me the usual number this year."

"And me, too, said Janet. "He sha' n't lose, even if I do try a new-fangled New England broom once in a while."

"Alan says he does n't mind Yankee notions when he can get any good out of them, so he sometimes makes his pa buy Mr. Whitney's beef when he brings it round."

"Oh! we buy it, are glad to," said Janet.

"So are we," said Mrs. Craig. "We 've been dining off one of his roasts to-day."

"It 's fine beef; I've enjoyed it," Mrs. Baird said.

"I call it an advance," said Uncle Will, "to have prime beef-cattle fattened, slaughtered, and brought to our doors. I 'm glad a man enterprising enough for the work has come among us. He 's succeeding well, too. He has paid for his farm, and is making money off it, he tells me."

"Husband says that 's the main thing, after all.

Still, peddling beef about the country is something we think strange of; but we lay it to his Yankeeism, and so let it pass."

"But when we remember the clock peddler, we can see that this is a very superior man," said Uncle Will.

"Oh! Mr. Judson was certainly a born Yankee. Alan's never done laughing over the way he palmed off a clock on poor Mrs. Hardy; he could n't take husband in, though."

"Why," said Janet, "Mrs. Hardy told me, not long ago, how delighted she was with that very clock; she would n't part with it for any money. It's better company than ever to her now that Miles is away so much with his stage."

"O ma!" said Phoebe, "we must be sure to send pa to see Miles the very next time his stage comes in, so that he can find out all about it; for that's the way we're going to Virginia."

"Now, Phoebe, I feel as if I was between two fires, with you coaxing me to go on that journey, and expecting Alan home with his bride. Do you want to see me quite distracted, child?"

"We can't keep the poor woman long off her woes," thought Uncle Will. "'All roads lead to Rome.'"

CHAPTER XI.

PRETTY NETTIE.

MRS. BAIRD had put her house in order, she and Thad had prepared a feast, and all the family were in holiday attire when the bridal party arrived.

They heard the horses and Alan's shout, then all hastened to the porch to see the newcomers.

It was a large party, six horses. Alan and his wife came first. Mrs. Baird, unhappy and dissatisfied as she was, could not help noticing with pride Nettie's handsome horse and fine saddle. Alan rode Hawkeye. Then came a pack-horse, with the bride's outfit. The other horses each carried double, six negroes, three of them children.

Mrs. Baird and Phœbe looked at each other in dismay. They had only heard that black Sol was coming.

Alan was triumphant. In the midst of the greetings, while Nettie was being welcomed, he said, "Look, ma; see, pa, I 've got Sol for my office-boy, and a whole nigger family besides."

Nettie was so amiable and so evidently happy that

her new relations could not help being pleased with her; she took her father-in-law's heart by storm; and Mrs. Baird, looking at the bright young face that had never a line of care on it, thought, "I've been fretting for nothing, maybe. I don't see how I can help loving her, and Phœbe looks pleased; I do hope we'll be happy after all." Then she thought of the six new slaves, and took up her burden again. "What shall we do with them? two of them nothing but pickaninnies; and we have n't had a child in the house since Phœbe was little. Oh! why did n't Alan make sure of having a house of his own? there is n't even a quarter for them."

After tea, while Phœbe was showing Nettie her flower-garden, Alan said, "Now, ma, I know you're satisfied; and pa's just brimming over, he's so pleased. And Nettie's delighted with everybody and everything here, she's told me so already."

Alan was his parents' idol, in spite of all the trouble and anxiety he gave them; now they certainly ought to be happy, for here seemed to be success and fair sailing at last. Alan was jubilant, completely carried away with delight.

"I don't see how you could have brought me a daughter that could please me better, Alan."

"It's soon to say that, pa," interposed Mrs. Baird;

"but, indeed, it seems as if you may be right. She looks lovely as can be, Alan."

"That 's just what she is. Oh, Nettie 'll win her way, no doubt of that. And were n't you surprised at all the property we brought home? It makes us rich from the first."

"But I do wish we 'd known about their coming, and had a quarter built. Thad does n't know where in the world to put them to-night."

"Why, Sol 's to sleep in my office. I said so from the first; just give him a shake-down there. And can't the others sleep over the kitchen? Why, yes, ma, that will do very well; Thad can find another place easy enough, in the barn or somewhere."

His mother shook her head. "I never feel safe at night unless Thad 's in the house."

"Now, ma, what nonsense! with pa and me both here, too! I reckon it 's more to keep old Thad safe than anything else. Well, then let Tip's family go to the barn; Thad's room would n't hold so many anyhow. They 've never been anything but field-hands, so the barn 's plenty good for them."

"I hope the hay 'll be safe. I saw him and his wife both smoking pipes at the kitchen-door."

"Oh, ma! don't worry so," interposed Mr. Baird. "Of course they 've got sense about that."

"They have n't tobacco enough to last any time. It 'll be burnt out long before they go to bed."

"Tobacco burned us out of house and home once."

"Now, ma, remembering old scores like that, when I had forgotten it," protested Alan, "and have got a right to be happy, too."

"I don't know how it is, Alan, but those six people of yours seem like a leaden weight to me, a burden I can't bear."

"Now, ma, don't give up so," urged Mr. Baird, "just when we thought you were going to cheer up. Alan, why can't you set those fellows to building a quarter to-morrow?"

"They can do it just as well as not. Tip 's strong as a giant; and with Sol and Thad to help, the work can be done in a day, easily. And, ma, I don't see why you 're fretting about my nigs; their work 's cut and dried for them already. Sol 's to do everything I want in my office and out of it; take care of the fire, won't that please you? and ride errands for me, the doctor gave him a horse on purpose. Old Thompson — my father-in-law — has been generous with his horses, — gave me four, all good ones."

"You could n't have got here with fewer," said his mother.

“No; and he said I ’d certainly need one to save Hawkeye if I did much riding. I told him I often rode all day.”

“Only when you go hunting, Alan.”

“Well, ma, he ’s not a man that wants to listen to much explanation, my new father-in-law is n’t. But you see I have a choice horse for my own riding, every bit as good as Hawkeye.”

“Better, for you have n’t had a chance to wear him out with racing.”

“Now, pa, I ’m just glad you and old Thompson have n’t a chance to talk together.”

“I wanted to go to the wedding mighty bad, Alan. If I ’d only known the day in time, I should have tried to get there, far as it was.”

“Why, I thought you could n’t possibly leave ma; it would have been pleasant, of course, if you could all have come, that ’s what Nettie’s folks said, but I told them it was impossible. But about the horses,—two are for Tip to work with. He’s always been a field-hand, so of course he ’ll be very useful. And his wife, ma, is to be cook; you ’ve often said you wished you could be free from the kitchen, so here ’s your chance.”

“But you say she ’s been a field-hand, too. What does she know about cooking?”

"Everything, I reckon. Miss Hadassah had Jen in the kitchen teaching her, this long time, two or three weeks anyhow, ever since it was settled Nettie was to bring her away with her."

"O Alan! the way you talk just shows how little you know of the work it takes to train a cook. That biggest girl will likely be an apter scholar."

"Oh! you can't have her, she 's Nettie's maid; she 's been teaching her to sew, and do her hair and I don't know what all."

"Then, who 's left to take care of the little ones?"

"What care do they need? Are n't they big enough to help their mother? Did n't Phoebe and I when we were four and six?"

"Dr. Thompson had an old nurse on the place, who took care of all the pickaninnies; I reckon that was the way of it, Alan," said Mr. Baird, who was smoking, and enjoying the conversation which was so distressing to his wife.

"O Alan! I wish you 'd left those little creatures there till they got bigger, or till your house was built."

"Well, now, ma, I can have that house any time. It was n't worth while to build it as long as I thought I 'd have to be partner with Dr. Thompson. I 'm mighty glad he decided he did n't want

me, not yet a while, anyhow. It gives me more holiday; and Nettie likes it better, too."

"I reckon the doctor thinks there 'll be more to leave to her if he takes care of his practice himself, instead of letting you meddle."

"Maybe so, pa. I 'll have to look for Nettie; she 'll wonder what 's become of me."

Nettie was amiability itself. She began at once to call Mr. and Mrs. Baird pa and ma, which pleased them. "The dear girl lost her mother when she was very young. Well, she shall find one in me," was Mrs. Baird's thought.

The new daughter expressed a desire to be useful in the household. The first morning after her arrival she said, "I hope you 'll let me relieve you all I can, ma. Aunt Hadassah has taught me the duties of a housekeeper; and I do wish you 'd let me take charge here, so that you can get a good rest. Alan says that 's what you need."

"Oh! my dear, it 's early times yet to be thinking of such cares. I want you to feel free to enjoy yourself, be as happy as you can."

"I certainly shall be." Nettie looked as if she could n't help being happy. "But won't you let me give out the stores? Auntie took so much pains to teach me; I 've been at it more than six

months; she made me be very particular about weighing, and keeping things locked up, and taking care of the keys. She said she hoped I 'd go right on, for it 's so easy to forget."

"The way you talk reminds me of when I was a young thing like you, Nettie. At home, in Virginia, we lived that way, giving out breakfast and dinner and supper, weighing and measuring three times a day, locking up the store-room and pantry, and keeping a sharp lookout on the smoke-house and spring-house."

"And losing the keys time after time, ma, you used to tell me," said Phœbe.

"Yes, no end of trouble that way. Or else the doors were broken open,—no one knew how,—and things stolen, the choicest always, and no way to trace the thief. But it 's different here, Nettie. We don't lock up. We have only Thad, and he 's honest as the sun; he takes things just as he needs them, and knows how the stores go better than we do."

"Alan said he was a treasure. But maybe things will be different now, with all our darkies here. Auntie told me to keep an eye on Jen and Till; she says she never knew one that was n't light-fingered."

"She 'll have to change her mind if she ever sees

Thad," said Phœbe, who began to think that perhaps she might n't like her new sister after all.

"O Nettie!" said Mrs. Baird, "I do hope you have n't brought a thief here; I don't want to begin to lock up. It would seem like slavery to me now."

"It 's maybe caused by slavery; but it 's white folks' work, that 's the way Aunt Hadassah talks. She says she would n't have it different, though it is such a bother; she thinks it 's the only way to keep house. But you need n't mind, ma, since I 'm here and want to do it; you 'll not have any more trouble than before."

"Oh, dear!" thought Phœbe; "Nettie 's talking just like Alan. Ma will have more trouble; only hear those pickaninnies screaming and quarrelling in the dooryard."

"And I 've learned to take care of the silver, too," continued Nettie. "Auntie let me have charge of ours this winter; and it 's very valuable, especially the pieces that belong to grandma, and which are promised to me. Alan thought I ought to have them now; he said he did n't know how to come away without my silver, but grandma holds on to it. It 's willed to me, though, so I 'm sure of it."

Mrs. Baird felt her poverty when she thought of

the few spoons that constituted her stock of household silver.

“I left my share at home in Virginia. I ’m like you in that, Nettie. We have n’t enough to make work for anybody.”

“Then, I can cut the loaf-sugar. I ’ve learned that perfectly. I make lumps that exactly fit the tongs and cups, without wasting, too. I like to cut it since I ’ve learned to do it so well. Auntie told me not to trust a loaf of sugar to a servant; she never does. I brought my little hammer and tongs; and if you don’t even let me do as much as that, I shall have to write to auntie that I ’m nothing but a drone.”

But Nettie soon found her time occupied with social pleasures. The people in the valley were disposed to be friendly. She received visits and returned them. She was pleased to become acquainted with the Craigs, the Murrays, the Logans, and many others of whom she had often heard. She had been specially interested in the story of Nacoochee; now she saw her in her home, beautiful as she had imagined her, and evidently very happy.

“Major Logan could n’t be prouder of his wife if she was a queen instead of an Indian,” said Nettie, after visiting the Logans. “She ’s a beauty.”

"Why should n't he be proud of her? they say she 's of royal blood. But I reckon she 's not more than quarter Indian. She 's rich, oh, tremendously rich! that must go a long way with the major."

"I don't believe he married her for her money; he does n't look like that kind of a man. You did n't choose me for my money. If you did, please don't ever let pa know it." Nettie laughed. "I like their house; it 's the prettiest I 've seen in Chilhowee. Why can't we build one like it?"

"It does well enough, but wait till you 've seen Mr. Whitney's, our Yankee neighbor. I 'll take you riding there to-morrow to order some beef or a broom, if you say so; then you can see his handsome stone house and fine lawn; you 'll want the place bad enough, but you can't get it. A few years ago pa could have bought it cheap, if he 'd had his wits about him."

"I 'm not going to covet anybody's property, when we can build to suit ourselves as soon as you get time to attend to it."

"Yes, there 's no hurry; we 've got lots of visits to make, and the weather could n't be pleasanter for riding. And there 's my practice; I must soon begin to devote myself to that. I want to have a firm hold here before Ken Craig gets home."

"I do hope you will, — keep ahead of Dr. Craig, of all things. I 'm afraid I can't be friendly to him if he turns out to be your rival."

Nettie knew how to enjoy herself, and make Alan waste his time. He had little chance to work up a practice, for she expected him to be always at her beck and call. "And yet she wants me to get ahead of Dr. Ken; well, I can't help it if she hinders." Alan enjoyed play as much as Nettie did.

When they were not riding or visiting, she made him practise archery or play ball; if by any chance he was hindered, she coaxed Phœbe or Mr. Baird to play with her, or, failing them, she tossed her ball with Tray, or even black Till.

"Nettie is more ornamental than useful, ma," said Phœbe one day, as she beat eggs for a custard, and watched her new sister at play in the garden with her dog and maid.

"Yes, is n't she pretty? But she never lifts a finger to help in any way, after all that grand palaver, too, about relieving me; why, I can safely say I never was so busy in my life as since she 's been here; and I hate so to see you working for her when you ought to be having a pleasant time as well as she."

"I shall have, ma, before long. I 'm going to Virginia."

"And leave me in all this trouble ! O Phœbe !"

"No ; I 'll take you along, ma."

"O Phœbe ! if I go, I 'll feel as if I 'm being driven away by Alan ; for things would all come right if it was n't for his foolishness in not building his house."

"He does n't see the need of the house. It 's just like a fine visit to him and Nettie, with you slaving for them day after day, and making sure that everything goes right."

"And your pa 's so delighted with Nettie that he 'd sooner they 'd stay than build ; he and Alan don't think there 's a bit of hurry now since the office and quarter are done. Well, Nettie certainly would have no comfort in Jen if she had to depend on her for a cook ; she 'll never make one. I 'd never let her into my kitchen again if I could help it."

"I wish you 'd make it a rule, ma, and stick to it. I can't eat anything she has a hand in, and neither can you, and she wastes and spoils no end of dishes ; if her cooking went on the table, Alan would soon make an outcry."

"She 's really no help ; and, besides, she 's light-fingered, as Nettie said. Why, I had to hide those eggs that I wanted for the custard, or she 'd have

given them to the children without leave. She 's always doing such things."

"Thad says she and Till skim the cream off the pans in the spring-house, and drink it. Soon we 'll have no butter."

"Well, Phœbe, I don't know what in the world to do."

"You know the fried chicken and biscuit fell short this morning. Well, Jen fed them to the children; sneaked a panful of each out of the kitchen into the yard, instead of bringing them to the table. I saw the little darkies running about with their hands full; even Till took her share. I 've had so much to do, I forgot to tell you before."

"It does n't do me any good to know it. Why, Phœbe, I made every one of those biscuit myself; and you fried the chicken, did n't you? Oh! Jen's worse than nobody to have about."

"We 're really cooking for her whole family, all Nettie's negroes. For she leaves her plate full on purpose for Till, and Alan's is for Sol, and pa's is left for somebody else; he says it 's Virginia fashion, and he 's glad to keep it up."

"Well, so it is, Phœbe, and I like it, of course; but when it comes to the mistress and her daughter doing all the cooking, it 's hard to follow."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PARSON TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

It was only Phœbe's hope of escaping to Virginia that enabled her to bear her present trials with equanimity. The subject distressed her mother, so she could not speak of it freely. But she was making her plans. She was to have a new dress for Alice Murray's wedding, and now she coaxed her mother to buy one for herself also. "We 'll be that much nearer ready to start on our journey," thought she.

Nettie took great interest in the new dresses, and offered to help make them. "I 'm very fond of sewing on a rainy day," she said. "Auntie always made me do my mending then, but since I 've got everything new I don't even have stockings to darn. I 'll give you a good lift on that work the very next time it rains."

"What if it does n't rain between now and the wedding-day?" thought Phœbe. "We must have the dresses all the same. Nettie 's a poor dependence. I 'll not wait for her."

But the next day proved rainy. Nettie could not enjoy any of her usual amusements, and was glad to sew; some of her own dresses afforded good hints as to style, and the work soon had a fair start. "We've happened on Nettie's good side at last," thought Mrs. Baird, as she saw how she enjoyed her self-imposed task. "Since she likes to sew, there's some hope that she'll put her people's clothes in order."

One of Mrs. Baird's anxieties had been about the clothing of Nettie's negroes. Some of them were poorly clad when they came, and were now in rags, the children especially. She soon began to talk on the subject, but Nettie's answers were discouraging.

"I never helped auntie with such work; she knew I could n't bear to sew rough stuff, or anything that was n't pretty, and so she always excused me. Oh! of course she had a great deal to do, for pa has lots of servants; but one of the women in the house is a good sewer, and always helped. Auntie had to do the cutting out, though. She said I ought to learn to cut out, but I really had n't time."

"And how do you intend to manage? Jen and the children need clothes now."

"Do they? Oh! well, they're regular tear-coats. Jen always was. Her clothes were good enough when she came, I'm sure; and it's her own fault if

she did n't take care of them. But she 's been a field-hand, you know ; and such creatures really don't care how they 're dressed. Of course, when she needs anything she shall have it, but auntie and grandma have taught me not to be wasteful."

"She has nothing to go to church in, she tells me. Don't you think she 'd feel more ambitious if she had a Sunday dress?"

"What use has she for one ? she ought n't to leave those children while they 're so little, even to go to church. When they get bigger I 'll give her one of my dresses, and she 'll feel fixed up. I can't now, of course, for I have n't brought any but brand new ones."

"Keeping the servants in clothes is a great task, I know," said Mrs. Baird. "I remember how it was at home in Virginia; there was always a pile of shirts on hand, or frocks, or aprons; we thought it was holiday when we had only stockings to knit. I would n't be willing to undertake such a burden again. I 'm glad I have only Thad. Of course he can always have a Sunday suit out of an old one of his master's."

"To be sure," agreed Nettie. "Pa always gave his coats to Sol and Pete before they were half worn out, and now Alan's will do for Sol. Since I 've

taken Till for my maid, of course I try to keep her neat; but I don't believe I 'll succeed, for she 's a caution, as big a tear-coat as her mother. I 've begun to teach her to sew; she 's got to mend her own clothes. It 's not so much matter about the young ones; they 're just as happy ragged as whole, grandma used to say. Auntie says a coffee-sack 's the best thing to dress them in, it never wears out."

Mrs. Baird did not pursue the subject. She wanted to call Nettie's attention to Tip's needs; but it seemed useless, though the matter troubled her greatly.

Now Kenneth and Margaret returned from the East, and took up their abode in Mrs. Pratt's house on the mountain-side, where Dr. Craig expected to practise his profession, much to his mother-in-law's satisfaction. She had been making a long visit to Lucy at Leighton Hall, but had now come home, escorted by her son Ned, to welcome them, and also to attend her son George's wedding. For at last the time had come when Dr. Pratt could claim his bride, Alice Murray, whom he had loved and waited for since her early childhood.

The marriage gave almost as much delight to Parson Craig's household as to those of the bride and groom, for Alice had been loved as a daughter by her uncle's family. It was a surprise to many that

Hugh Craig did not attend the wedding, for Alice had always been his favorite cousin. But it was understood that his duties at his Indian mission prevented his coming.

John Craig also was absent, being far away in Mississippi. But the family had good news from him. He had reached Natchez safely, and, finding employment there, was contented to stay for the present instead of venturing farther down the river.

"All our brides must see Leighton," said Mrs. Pratt, on parting with her new daughter-in-law. "Leigh calls it Paradise, since Lucy is there. May you be as happy as she, dear Alice, or as Margaret. I cannot wish you more."

"I wish my Alice to be the happiest of the happy," said the bridegroom. George Pratt was much older than his bride; but the difference being on the right side made it very satisfactory, especially to her mother, who said, with confidence, "George, I know you will take care of Alice."

"But who will take care of you, mother? that's what I'm thinking of." Young as this only daughter was, she had long been a "little mother" in her home.

"Don't think about that, dear; I'm sending you away to be happy." Mrs. Murray, timid but un-

selfish, had schooled herself to be brave in the parting.

"Think how near Willowdale is," said the father; "after a few happy weeks, we shall be happier still to see you there."

Interested as the Craigs were in the wedding and in Kenneth's return, there was something that pleased the parson and his wife even more. Don had come home to preach his first sermon.

Chilhowee Church had not an empty seat that Sunday. All his father's people loved Don, and listened with delighted eagerness as he preached from the text, "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come."

Don's first words showed how he loved the message which it was now his blessed privilege to proclaim.

He told his hearers how plain the path to Zion was; one needed only to turn the face thitherward to see the marvellous light; the Lamb was the light thereof. And in all the ages since the prophet's day, voices had been saying, "Come," till the glorious day of grace when the Redeemer himself stood in the midst of the people and cried, "Come unto me;" and still would sound the loving call till the triumphant day when Christ again would proclaim, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

Many thanked the young preacher at the close of church, but his father's look of approval pleased him most. "My son, my dear son, you did well." The parson was too much overcome with joy to say more.

After a brief stay at home, Don intended to start on that long journey to which he had delighted to look forward even in his boyhood, when Buncombe should carry him to visit Grandfather Craig and Leigh at Leighton, and many other spots which he had a longing to see. His father thought it a wise thing to do before he settled down to his life-work.

The parson expressed his views as he walked with Don in the garden. "I wish Hugh had wanted something of the sort. To have wide interests, to see much, broadens the mind, increases the capacity for work; already I see it in Kenneth. John, poor boy, was determined to give himself the chance at all hazards, and in the way which at first glance did not seem the wisest. But John will do well. I have no doubt of that. He will come out right in the end.

"Now, Hugh has no thought except for his home and his Indian mission-work; they absorb his interest, he gives all his love to them; and that is well if he does n't get too much into a groove, and

grow narrow. I was disappointed that he did not come home at this time, a wedding is a grand occasion for a family gathering; and he misses the opportunity of seeing Ken on his first return after such a long absence; and you just going, and Hugh did not hear your first sermon! I wonder at his being willing to lose so much pleasure and profit. I fear he has made an uncalled-for sacrifice. To have a morbid sense of duty is not well. Surely he could have arranged matters so as to ride home, if only for a day."

Don could not bear to hear Hugh criticised, even in such a loving way. He had been much disappointed at his absence; but he understood the reason of it, and was surprised that his father did not. He felt that he must speak a word to clear his brother; it would now be no betrayal of confidence.

"Hugh did n't want to come to Alice's wedding, father. He said as much in a letter to me when the time was first set. I knew it was because — Oh! don't you know that 's why — why he was so glad to go away?"

"Why, my son, you don't mean to say that he" —

"Yes, he loved Alice. He never said more than five words to me about it; but I understood because I knew before, oh! for a long time."

“Well! well! and I never thought of it. Why, our sweet Alice has been like another sister to you boys; a first cousin is very near and dear, and you had only little Bess. But I never could approve the marriage of first cousins.”

“Hugh knew it, and he does n’t, either. Thinking that way I believe kept him from realizing how much he cared for Alice, till all at once he heard she was to marry Dr. Pratt. He said after that he was glad to think he would soon have work in the Indian country.”

“Poor dear boy! And yet I don’t think Alice cared for him any more than for her other cousins.”

“No, she did not; and she did n’t know he felt differently. He was glad, he wants her never to know. She has no heart except for Dr. George. I could n’t help telling you, father, because I want you to understand Hugh.”

The parson meditated long after Don left him. Here had been two of his sons, Hugh and John, fighting battles under his roof, and he not dreaming of it. How gladly he would have sympathized and helped. Why had they not come to him? And he must hear their stories through Don, who knew without being told.

Parson Craig had a soul above envy, or he might

have envied his son Donald, who could so readily win love and confidence, but instead he loved him all the more for the many talents with which he had been blessed.

“I must take the first opportunity to ride to see Hugh. He has been brave where I thought otherwise. Poor Hugh! Dear, happy Alice! He has taken the best course for happiness, working for others. In God’s service, a higher love, which cannot be taken away, can make amends for the lesser hopeless one.”

Still another event occurred at this time which in some degree affected all the family, but more especially Alec and Bessie. It was the death of their pet dog, Ring. They had never known their home without their faithful old dog.

Alec wrote to John about it:—

“I know you ’ll be sorry when I tell you Ring ’s drowned. He got out of the gate somehow. When we missed him, of course I jumped on Snip, and rode down to Silver as fast as I could. And there was Jabez, our new field-hand, just fording the creek with poor drowned Ring; he ’d been working in the bottom, and had seen Ring floating in the water.

“We did n’t know what in the world to do, but Thad came along, and you just ought to have heard

how he talked about Ring; he was as sorry as if Ring had been somebody instead of only a dog. He told the brave things he had done. Thad can remember very far back.

“He says he thinks this is the way it happened. ‘Pore Ring mus’ ‘a’ limped all de way through de cedars fer to git a drink outer Silver; an’ when he bent his head down to lap de water he wuz too stiff wid rheumatiz to straighten up ag’in, an’ he jes’ mus’ ‘a’ tumbled ober inter de water off de bank head fo’most. Den he could n’t he’p but drown. Dat ’s how it mus’ ‘a’ been. Dere wuz no swim lef’ in him; but arter all he got dat drink he ’d been hankerin’ fer.’

“Jabez brought his spade; and they dug a deep hole on Silver Creek bank, under the big willow, just this side of the ford, where Ring used to wait for father.

“When I came home without Ring, Bess cried, and mother and father and Don told us stories about him all dinner-time. He helped Hugh bring his sheep over the mountains. He saved us from the wolves the very first night we slept in Chilhowee Parsonage. Don says he was fighting all the time in his young days; nobody knows how old he was.

“Ring has a tombstone. I wish you could see it.

I found a smooth board, and Thad jammed it down till it was very firm. This is what I wrote on it:—

BRAVE RING.
FROM NORTH CAROLINA.
A GREAT FIGHTER.
VERY AGED.
HE FOUGHT THE WOLVES.
HE SAVED OUR LIVES.
HE DID ALL HE COULD.

I wrote it with some real Indian paint of Thad's; Pukpuggee gave it to him. Bess feels better since I took her down to Silver to see Ring's tombstone. It 's just where everybody that crosses the ford can read it.

“Bess says I ought to write to Hugh next, because he could n't come to Alice's wedding. I have n't time now, but I reckon I 'll write to him when Snip dies. He 's getting stiff, too. Father says he 's our very oldest horse.

“I 've lost Jim Crow, just since Alan Baird came home, and I 'm mighty sorry. He was learning something new all the time. Alan says he does n't know anything about it, but I reckon it was his gun took poor Jim off.

“Alan 's trying to get all the patients he can since Ken 's come home and hung out his shingle.

But we all know Ken 'll get ahead. You ought to see Dr. Ken since he came home; he looks splendid, tip-top, wears city-made clothes; takes the shine off Dr. Alan, I tell you. He brought a fine suit for Don, and he looks grander than anybody.

"They are all glad you like it in Natchez, but I wish you 'd gone on down the river till you came to the alligators. You said you would n't stop till you saw some.

"Oh! I almost forgot to tell you; Ken says Mr. Ford 'll have to be very careful if he goes back to that milk-sick farm, for nobody can find out what it is the cows eat that makes them sick. But if he thinks they 're getting it, he ought to feed them on plenty of corn. But the safest way is to do like Mr. Campbell; he never lets his cows feed in any pasture where there are weeds, but sows clover for them, and they don't get sick. He 's clearing his farm as fast as he can; and he says the ground 'll soon all be safe and healthy. But Janet says Mr. Campbell 's a canny Scotchman; not many people are willing to go to so much trouble. 'It takes eternal vigilance to cure a milk-sick farm,' that 's just what Ken said."

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. BAIRD'S DESPERATE RESOLVE.

PHŒBE was almost in despair about ever getting to Virginia. Her mother refused to talk or think of it, and Phœbe knew she could not go alone.

"I feel as if I 'd have to stay at home, Phœbe, if it was only to clothe Nettie's people. And it will take spinning and weaving. Think of the task!"

"I know. Old clothes would n't last any time, even if we had them to give."

"No; Jen 's torn the dress I gave her till I can't bear to see her in it. And anything I give Tip 's just stolen from Thad. Your pa's old clothes don't more than do for him."

The matter worried Mrs. Baird greatly; and, as time went on, things of course grew worse; the clothes became more ragged each day.

"I cannot bear to live with scarecrows about me," she said to Alan. "I think every one of your new people ought to have a dress fit to go to church in."

"Oh, well, ma! that 's for Nettie to settle. She knows what they 've been used to."

Mrs. Baird could not refrain from speaking on the subject again to Nettie, but with apparently no effect. The indifference of the young mistress provoked her.

But Alan and Nettie consulted together, and settled on a plan. One day Alan startled his mother with the announcement that Miss Hadassah was coming to make them a visit.

"O Alan, as if I had n't trouble enough without such a visitor! Why does n't she wait till you have a house of your own?"

"She 's coming to see about the people's clothes, ma. They can't wait forever for them, can they? We thought you wanted them to have new ones in a hurry. Nettie could n't bear to see you so worried about it. She thought the quickest way to get over the trouble was to write to her aunt. She 's coming with her sewing-woman, and they 'll soon get things to rights."

"Alan! you invited her to come to my house — without consulting me! Phœbe, could you have believed such a thing?"

Mrs. Baird's temper was seldom roused; but her children saw that she was angry now.

"Why, ma!" said Alan, "she 's Nettie's aunt. We did n't think you could object."

"If it was even her mother or father I should have been consulted. It 's my house, not yours, Alan."

"Now, ma, when you see Aunt Hadassah you won't mind her any more than you would a fly. I don't. It 's nothing like as bad as if it was a mother-in-law coming. I 'm thankful I have n't any."

"When is she coming?"

"She has n't set the day; as soon as she can, while the good weather lasts, that 's how she writes."

"What room have you and Nettie decided to give her?"

"Why, ma, we could n't settle that; it 's your house. But could n't Phœbe" —

"Go to the loft? That 's the only vacant room, you know."

"Oh, well! I know she could n't go there, and neither could Miss Hadassah; but she would n't mind a bit sharing Phœbe's room, and the sewing-woman could have the loft."

His mother's face had a cold, almost indifferent look, and her voice and words were like her face.

"You can arrange to suit yourself. I shall not be

here, nor Phœbe. We shall start for Virginia before Miss Hadassah arrives."

"O ma! are you really going?" cried Phœbe. "Then I 'm glad Miss Hadassah 's coming, for you never would promise before."

"And it is Alan crowding me out of my own home, now, Phœbe."

Mrs. Baird's sudden determination to visit Virginia came like a thunderbolt to her husband and son, who both tried to dissuade her.

Alan was specially disturbed when he found she was resolved to take Thad with her.

"Oh, ma! it 's bad enough to think of missing you, when we never dreamed of such a thing. But Thad to be away, too! Why, you always said the place could n't spare him."

"It can spare him better than I can, Alan. I must have somebody to protect me on the road."

"It 's a pity pa can't go, then."

"I 'd like the trip well enough, you know that, Alan; but when ma 's so worried we 'll have to let her have her own way, and she 's bent on my staying here to look after things."

Mr. Baird had never been a favorite in his wife's family; and her sister had failed to include him in her invitation, while pressing Mrs. Baird and Phœbe

to visit her. But he did not feel called on to allude to this phase of the matter when he had more plausible excuses. "I reckon we 'll have to be thinking about putting up that house while she 's away, Alan."

"O husband! please do more than think about it; for I 'm not coming back till the house is built, remember that."

"Alan, it 's a big pity for ma to go off and leave us this way, when she does n't half want to. I reckon, if we 'd stir round a little, we might soon make a start on that work. Friends would help quick enough, if they knew it was to keep ma from taking that dreadful journey. Why, ma, such traveling will frighten you half to death, and you won't have me along, either."

Mrs. Baird was sewing; she had left the kitchen to Jen, and Nettie had been obliged to go thither to investigate matters, for it appeared that dinner would never be served. It was evident to all the family that a new order of things had begun. Alan already saw how important it was that his mother should remain at home.

"Pa 's right about the dangers you and Phoebe 'll be in, ma," he said. "I don't believe either of you will go a step when it comes to starting. Miles Hardy

can't persuade his mother to travel in his stage, he 's told her such fearful tales about the road."

"We 're going, Alan, so you need n't try to frighten us," said Phœbe, who felt happier than she had in a long time.

"Yes, Alan, the letter 's started to tell your Aunt Rachel to expect us," said his mother.

"Well, you have been quick! That 's what took Thad to the settlement post-haste, instead of going to the mill. I wondered at Nettie's saying Sol must go for the meal, when he did n't half know the way, and I had something else for him to do, too. Nettie says she feels as if she was in a heap of trouble when she thinks about your going away so suddenly."

"She 'll not have time to fret long," said Mrs. Baird, "since her aunt 's coming so soon."

"She 's afraid Aunt Hadassah 'll be hurt, because it looks as if you 're running away from her."

Mrs. Baird smiled grimly, and took quick stitches. "You can explain matters to Miss Hadassah, Alan."

"Now, ma, it 's a new thing for you to like to leave people in the lurch. Nettie fairly cried this morning at the thought of having Jen on her hands. She feels as if she was only a visitor here, you know. And she was enjoying herself so much."

"I'm glad to know it. Phœbe and I have done our best to make it pleasant for her. I wanted her to be happy."

"Miss Hadassah can finish teaching Jen how to cook," said Phœbe. "Then Nettie 'll be happy again, if that 's all she has to cry about. She says her aunt told her Jen would make a capital cook."

"You 're just glad I 'm in a scrape, Phœbe, I can see it in your eyes. Ma, if we 'd had any idea that you 'd go off instead of staying to entertain Miss Hadassah, and tote Thad off, too, Nettie says she would n't have asked her to come one step, for she 'll be really mortified if things don't go straight. When in the world is that dinner coming? I 'm getting ravenous. And Nettie 's bothering over it all this time. We wanted to go a long ride this afternoon. That comes of sending Sol to mill when he was sure he 'd lose his way."

"Oh! he 's got home with the meal," said Phœbe, who sat at a window which commanded a view of the kitchen; "for I saw Jen throw a panful of burnt bread to the chickens. Nettie 's finding out what a bother her cook is."

"Nettie 's not concerning herself in the matter," said Mr. Baird, who sat smoking at the front window. "See her."

There in the garden was his pretty daughter-in-law, tossing her ball with Tray, as serene and graceful as usual.

"Now Jen 's burning something else, by the way the smoke 's coming out of the kitchen-door. Don't you smell burned bones?"

"Oh, yes, Phœbe!" Mrs. Baird shook her head, but went on with her sewing in spite of her distress; evidently she had surrendered the kitchen to her daughter-in-law.

Alan began to dread his fate. He watched the kitchen-door. "There goes our dinner! O ma, that 's too bad!" as Jen ran out, carrying a pan of black meat, the fat blazing dangerously. "She is throwing our roast pork to the chickens."

"It 's burned to a crisp," said Phœbe.

"It 's well she got rid of it before she set the place on fire." Mrs. Baird held on to her work, as if she did not know her family was hungry.

"Ma and Phœbe must have made a plan about this, — leaving things to Nettie while they get ready for their trip," thought Alan. "I had no idea ma could be angry so long about Miss Hadassah, ever since yesterday. But she 'll get over it when she sees how dreadful things are. It 's Phœbe keeping her up to it."

"I 'm sorry if you 're hungry, pa," said Mrs. Baird. "It seems as if dinner 's going to be very late; but we must stick to this sewing, since the stage starts so soon. It 's almost the first hour I 've had my needle in my hand since Nettie came."

"Oh! never mind about me, ma; I 'm getting along well enough;" and Mr. Baird refilled his pipe. "Jen must learn sometime; she 'd better begin to-day than later."

"Ma, I don't see how you can go and leave pa to be so uncomfortable; you know he can't abide poor cooking."

"Your ma and Thad have spoiled me about that, Alan, making such dainty dishes, and Phoebe was learning. But don't bother poor ma. If she 's keen for going, we 'll have to help her and not hinder."

"Now, ma, would n't you stay if I got that house up before Miss Hadassah comes? There is n't time to send her word to wait, or I 'd certainly do it. But Thad and Tip and Sol — yes, I 'd spare Sol — could set right to work and clear the ground. The trees stand thick, but such good choppers could soon make room enough for the house. And pa and I could ride round and get the neighbors for a log-rolling; they 'd drop everything they were at to keep you here; did n't you say so, - pa? Why,

ma, the house would be done before you knew it. Nettie wants to wait till we can get workmen from Maryville to build something pretty like Major Logan's, but she 's willing to give that up to please you. 'Anything to please ma,' she said this morning."

Phoebe trembled as she waited for her mother's answer. "Alan 's determined to get his own way," thought she; "but oh, I do hope ma won't give up to him now, for she 'll just die if she stays here much longer."

Mrs. Baird spoke with unusual calmness and decision.

"I 've made up my mind to go, Alan. I did n't believe I could ever be willing to leave home, and take a long, troublesome journey, even to see my sister, and the old place in Virginia; but now I want to go. You know the reason why. You can begin on your house as soon as you choose, and I hope you 'll finish it to suit Nettie; but you can't keep me, and you can't have Thad to help, for Phoebe and I need him."

Mr. Baird, as he listened, thought, "We 'd be different folks if ma always had spunk enough to lay down the law that way; I allow we 'd hold our heads up higher."

Mrs. Baird was pleased to find that all her friends approved her plan. Mrs. Craig and Janet helped her with her sewing; but her greatest encouragement came from Mrs. Pratt.

"Don't be afraid of the journey, Mrs. Baird," said she. "You and Phœbe will probably find real enjoyment in it. Think what travellers my daughters and I have been in the last few years; very long journeys we've taken, you know, and we have never met with an accident in any of them."

"I do hope we shall have as good fortune. But I'm fearful of the stage, never having tried it."

"I think you'll find it safer and easier than horseback in many respects. For myself, I prefer my horse, I am so accustomed to riding, and have always been fearless."

"And you have such devoted sons that you are never without an escort."

"I am very happy in that respect. But now I am glad to think that my travelling days are over, for a long time, at least; for with my Margaret and Dr. Craig to make my home bright and happy, I may well content myself in this part of the world, although Lucy wants me quite as much as they do. She says the only cross in her lot is that Leighton is so far distant from Chilhowee."

Mrs. Baird smiled, thinking of Mrs. Pratt's happiness, and then sighed at thought of Alan. "Ah! how true it is, —

'My son 's my son till he gets him a wife,
But my daughter 's my daughter all the days of her life.'

Still, I 'm afraid Phœbe 'll leave me some day; then what would become of me?"

"O ma!" said Phœbe, "how easy it is for you to find things to fret about. I don't want to leave you. I don't intend ever to do it."

It made Alan very envious to think that his mother and sister would visit the old home when he had no chance. He still hoped they would change their minds, and stay at home. "It would be just like ma to back out at the last minute," he told Nettie. "She 's awfully afraid to travel, and I don't believe she 'll go one step."

But one day Thad came home from the parsonage with the announcement that "Marse Don" expected to start on his travels the same day the stage went, and would be able to keep them company a great part of the way.

"Then I reckon ma 'll go, Nettie," said Alan.

CHAPTER XIV.

MRS. BAIRD IN A STAGE-COACH.

THE stage was ready to start from its stand in the settlement. Mrs. Baird and Phœbe were seated in it. Alan and his father waited to see them off; Nettie also was there, enjoying the occasion. Thad was attending to the luggage, and consulting Miles Hardy, the driver, at request of his mistress, regarding the dangers of the road and the sure-footedness of his horses.

Mrs. Baird was evidently agitated and distressed, but trying to bear up under the strain of parting; while Phœbe looked serenely happy, with the thought that now the journey was a certainty.

"What 's Miles waiting for, I wonder?" said Alan. "He told me he started on the stroke."

"Then he 's different from when he was a youngster," said Mr. Baird.

"Oh! I hope it 's not time to go," said Mrs. Baird; "for Don 's not come yet."

"You 'll back out at the last minute, ma, if Don

does n't come." Alan chuckled at the thought. "Yes, Phœbe, you need n't shake your head, you know she will. It would please Nettie and me well enough."

"It 's hard to go, Alan, but I 've started." There were tears in Mrs. Baird's voice as well as in her eyes.

"Now, Alan," warned his father, "no use making ma feel worse than she does."

"When she 's got such a fine day for travelling, too," said Nettie. "Ma, I 'll take good care of pa while you 're away; you need n't worry about that."

"Here come the other passengers," announced Phœbe. "Now we 'll soon be off." Two farmers, one with his wife, approached, loaded with luggage.

"I 'm glad you and Phœbe had choice of seats, ma," said Mr. Baird. "Those two back corners are the best."

"Unless the coach tumbles over backwards," said Alan; "then everybody 'll fall atop of ma. Look what big men those are, just getting in."

"Don't think about that, ma. Alan knows the coach is more apt to fall every other way than backwards, unless it backs over a bluff; and Miles

is sharp enough to look out for that. Just stick to those seats, both of you, I say."

"Not if somebody comes to take the middle one," said Phoebe; "I 'll change then to keep by ma."

"Well, maybe you 'd find the middle better then, with somebody to knock against both ways."

"Yes, pa, so she would," said Nettie. "It 's awful to be bumping up against the coach-side at every tilt. Ma and Phoebe never travelled in a stage-coach before, or they 'd be afraid to take this journey."

"The road 's nothing but ruts," said Alan; "Miles is always complaining."

"I just hope you 'll soon have all the seats full, ma, that makes the easiest travelling; then you tumble against each other, and nobody 's hurt."

"You need n't want a coachful, ma; if there are many of them such giants as that man on the front seat, you 'd be sure to have a break-down. Miles came near losing a wheel the last trip."

"O pa! why don't we start?" said Phoebe. She was in dread lest her mother's resolution should fail.

"Miles and Thad have been mending something in the gearing, but they 're through now."

Miles came to Mrs. Baird's window before taking

his seat; he was too much pleased to have her and Phœbe as passengers to say anything to alarm them; and besides, Thad had given him a hint to be reassuring.

"This here ride into Virginny 'll be the crack one of the season, I allow, Mrs. Baird. The road is prime jes' now, an' the coach mended up complete, so it 's like new; an' them hosses is jes' as quiet as mules, every one mindin' at a word. Ma come mighty nigh agreein' to go along with us to-day, seein' we was in fer such a lucky time."

"I wish she had come, Miles."

"The trouble is she can't never be coaxed to leave pa. I 'll have to tote 'em both if ever ma goes to see the sights; 'pears so."

Mrs. Baird cast a sorrowful glance at her husband, who must be left behind while she was starting forth on a supposed pleasure-trip. Thad, discerning his mistress's thoughts, spoke quickly.

"Miles am de one ter git us ober de road safe, mistis; suten, sho. Why, he am fixed fer ebery sort o' mishap, — totin' a hull blacksmith-shop along a purpose to mend us up if we breaks down or if a hoss so much as loses a shoe."

"To be sure," agreed Miles. "I was n't settin' in Jacob Webster's shop fer nothin', 'stead o' goin' to

school. I larnt consid'able while I was loafin' there, an' now it 's doin' me a heap o' good."

"I don't half like it that you 've turned stage-driver, Miles," said Alan. "I miss those prime hunts we used to have together."

"I was about tired of havin' an empty pocket, Alan. I like it a heap better, now there 's money clinkin' in it," laughed Miles, as he climbed up to his seat, and cracked his whip.

"Starting without Don after all, ma," said Alan.

"Marse Don 's comin', mistis, he gib his wud fer it; him an' Buncombe kin ketch up easy."

"We 'll ride on with the coach a little way, Nettie," said Mr. Baird. "Ma 's lonesome, not seeing Don."

They had not gone far when three riders were seen in the distance.

"That 's not Don's road," said Mrs. Baird.

"And none of those horses is Buncombe," said Phoebe.

"Why, Nettie," exclaimed Alan, "I do believe it 's" —

"Oh! it 's Aunt Hadassah!" cried Nettie, starting off at a quick pace.

Of course Alan was compelled to hasten after her. "Good-by, ma," he shouted; "I hope you 'll be back

soon!" He had been leading Phœbe's horse, which she had ridden to meet the stage; now he threw the bridle to his father, who failed to catch it, and Bramble cantered off, while all eyes were fixed on Miss Hadassah and her escort, which consisted of two stout, comfortable-looking mulattoes, a man and a woman.

"The sewing-woman Nettie told us of, ma," said Phœbe, "and the doctor's body-servant, that Alan says he 's to have when Dr. Thompson 's dead."

"O Phœbe, what an escape! how could I have lived with such a burden? How thoughtless Alan and Nettie were! Miss Hadassah looks like a very formidable woman; I 'm glad I don't have to meet her."

"Ma, you 're leaving me with a great many responsibilities," said Mr. Baird, turning to the stage window after watching the meeting between Alan and the newcomers. "I 'll be sorry to think of your being gone very long."

"Send me word when Alan's house is built, and he in it; you need n't expect me before that, husband." The sight of Miss Hadassah had served to strengthen Mrs. Baird's resolve.

"Dar goes Bramble!" suddenly cried Thad, and dashed over the road in pursuit.

“Why, pa, Bramble will be lost! see that cane-brake! Oh! she ’s almost in it.”

“Why, Alan ’s left me in the lurch, I declare! I can’t do anything with your ma’s horse to hold. All this mischief happened in a minute, too. Never mind, Phœbe, Thad ’s sure to catch her. She ’ll stop when she hears his voice. There! he ’s got her!”

“O Phœbe! what ’ll become of Bramble when Thad ’s away? I ’m afraid you ’ll not have a pony to come back to, nor I.”

“Don’t think about it, ma. We ’re going away to forget things. Oh, here comes Don! Now we ’ll get along. And Dr. Ken ’s with him. There, the doctor ’s starting off the other way; he must be riding to see a patient. See, now Buncombe ’s trotting to catch up with us.”

Don came riding up with Thad and the captured horse.

“Glad to see you, Don,” said Mr. Baird. “I wanted to keep beside the stage for a while, but I can’t with two led horses on my hands. And there goes Alan with those folks as fast as he can trot. He seems to have forgotten Bramble altogether. I ’m glad you brought her back safe, Thad. I shall have to go right away if I ’m to get any help from

Alan with these horses. Good-by, ma; I 'm sorry to leave you so soon. Phœbe, take good care of ma. Thad, look well after your two mistresses."

Mrs. Baird cried as she watched her husband ride away with his troublesome charge, two led horses.

"I did n't believe I could ever do such a thing, Phœbe, as to leave your pa this way," sobbed she.

"Never mind, ma," whispered Phœbe, conscious of the curious eyes and ears of the other passengers. "It is n't any of it your fault, not the least bit. It 's Alan's and Nettie's and Jen's" —

"And Miss Hadassah's, and because nobody 'll build that house." Mrs. Baird straightened herself up, and wiped away her tears, indignation proving a useful stimulant at the moment.

Then Don rode up to the window; and his bright face and cheery voice had their usual effect on her, they charmed away her grief.

Don was familiar with the road for some distance, and took pains to point out every thing that might interest his friends. Mrs. Baird and Phœbe, who had never been farther from home than Maryville since coming to Tennessee, were delighted with the new scenes. The road was at its best, the horses needed no urging; they even went too fast for Phœbe, who wanted more than a glimpse of what

was grand and beautiful. Don or Thad kept by the window all the morning, whenever the width of the road permitted. It was a great pleasure to Thad to see his mistress sitting in her corner, rested and contented, looking happy even, while Phœbe smiled as if her troubles were all over.

Some of the passengers were beginning to talk about being hungry, but Phœbe and her mother could not believe it was near dinner-time. They were driving through thick woods, where the road was narrow and trees hid the view.

"There 's not much to look at just now, that 's what makes them think about dinner," said Phœbe.

Suddenly a great trumpet-blast sounded from overhead, loud, often repeated. At once Mrs. Baird, imagining Miles was calling for help, was terror-stricken; she thought of Indians, of horse-thieves, of highway robbers; this dark woods was the very place for waylaying the stage. She screamed, and grasped Phœbe. "Oh! what 's happened, child? Where 's Don? Thad! O Thad! Why is n't he here to protect us?"

"O ma! nothing 's the matter. Don't you see nobody else is frightened?"

Thad hurried to the window. "Mistis, dat am only Miles' ho'n, blowin' 'cause it 's nigh baitin'-

time. Now de folks at de stoppin'-place 'll know dey mus' hurry up dinner."

"Oh! is that all, Thad?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the big farmer. "They been listenin' for the horn. Now they 'll clap the chickens on to brile, as many as 'll be wanted. That 's a mighty knowin' signal to them that 's in the secret; it tells how many folks is wantin' dinner in this here stage. The driver give a toot for every one of us."

"I hope there 's no mistakin' it," said the other farmer. "'T would n't do to count me out, for I want my dinner bad."

"I never was as hungry, seems to me," said his wife.

"Well, the hosses is carryin' us there straight. They mus' know what 's before 'em by the way they trot."

CHAPTER XV.

STAGE-COACH STORIES.

WITHIN half an hour the travellers reached the inn, where they found a good dinner and more passengers waiting, so, when the stage started again, every seat was full. The coach held nine, having three benches, one at each end and one in the middle. The latter had for its back a broad leather belt, to be unhooked at one end when passengers wished to go to and from the back seats.

Phœbe gave her corner to a very stout woman, one of the newcomers, and the big farmer took a seat on the middle bench.

"O child! you 'll be smothered," whispered her mother; for the farmer's weight bent the leather strap like a bow, and Phœbe sat just behind.

"Never mind, ma, I 'll jolt easier, according to Nettie."

Soon they came to a very rough road.

"Mistis," said Thad at the window, "we hab gotter cross ober a pow'ful ruddy piece o' ground;

but Miles says der can't no harm happen noways, sutenly nothin' but joltin'."

Then for some time they saw no more of Thad or Don, who had to keep a careful watch on their horses' steps.

The new experience was extremely unpleasant to Mrs. Baird and Phœbe. The coach no longer rolled smoothly along, but heaved and plunged in a frightful way.

"This must be the place Alan told us about, ma. He said it kept Miles grumbling, and the horses were afraid of it. I hear him coaxing them now."

"They may well be frightened. I reckon they think the coach will pitch over on them. It 's a wonder they go on. How in the world can Miles keep his seat? Phœbe, you 'll be jolted to pieces, child!"

"It 's more like being in a boat than a coach," said Phœbe.

"It would take the roughest kind of water to make a boat as bad as this," said the stout woman in the corner.

"Some roads are the better for ploughing," said Mr. Jenkins, one of the new passengers. "That might improve this one."

"No, 't would n't," said the farmer on the front

seat. "It 's too powerful rocky in these diggin's, you could n't run a furrow noway."

"I 'd sooner it was mud than rocks, if we 've got to upset," said his wife.

"Bad 's the best," said another voice.

Then came a harder jolt than ever.

"Must be caught on a snag!"

"It 'll be a wonder if the coach is n't broken to pieces!"

"Don't mind makin' a piller of me, miss," as Phœbe's head thumped the burley farmer's shoulder.

"'T will maybe save you a broken nose."

"The young lady' s more like feathers than you are," said the stout woman.

"More 's the pity when it comes to a tug like this."

Trembling Mrs. Baird was sure they would n't escape with whole bones.

"I 'd sooner walk than ride," said one passenger.

"So would I, let 's 'light," agreed several.

But the resolve had come too late; as the men rose from their seats two of the wheels slipped into a very deep rut, and the coach gave a frightful lurch, throwing all the passengers against the sinking side.

Mrs. Baird and Phœbe were too frightened to

scream, and the shouts and exclamations of the other passengers added to their terror.

Miles sprang to the ground; Don and Thad hurried to the side of the coach where Mrs. Baird and Phoebe had been sitting. The angle at which it was tilted made it difficult to look in; but Thad succeeded, and cried out, "Mistis am atop, thank de Lord. But where be you, little missy?"

"O Thad! help ma," came the answer, in a smothered voice.

"Yes, we will, Miss Phoebe," Miles called out reassuringly. "'T ain't nigh as bad as a reg'lar upset; jes' stuck in a ditch, that 's it. We 'll git them wheels pried out in no time."

But Miles, strong as he was, and with Don and Thad to help, could not right the coach.

"Help me out!" wailed Mrs. Baird, at last finding her voice.

Miles and Thad succeeded in lifting her out of the window. Then Phoebe was rescued in the same way. Don helped Thad to lead half-dazed Mrs. Baird up the bank, where she and Phoebe sat on a log, and watched the escape of the other passengers from the stranded coach.

"Phoebe!" she gasped amid her sobs, "don't ever ask me to travel in a stage-coach again."

"Mistis, you be n't hurt any way, be you? or you, missy?" asked anxious Thad.

"Oh, I don't think so! You 're just frightened, is n't that it, ma?"

"I don't know; I thought I 'd die in that coach, and you, too, Phœbe. Oh! I ought never to have come; I was wanted at home, that was where I was needed. They were all against my coming away."

"Mother thought it was the very best thing you could do," said Don.

"Did she? Yes, I remember she told me so. Oh! how long ago it seems! Why, Phœbe, was it only this morning we left home?"

Soon Miles came to summon them. The coach was righted, and everybody ready to get in again.

"Don't ask me to ride in your stage, Miles," protested Mrs. Baird. "O Thad, if I only had my horse here!"

Miles was evidently distressed. "There ain't no way fer you to git over the road but the coach, fer as I can see, Mrs. Baird; an' there won't nothin' like this happen ag'in, you can take my word fer it."

"Oh! I know you 're careful, and it 's not your fault that the roads are bad."

"It was all those men getting up at once to climb

out that made the big tilt, ma. It was n't the least bit Miles's fault."

Miles smiled gratefully at Phœbe. "I 'm glad you don't blame me, Miss Phœbe. If there was anything in the world I wanted bad, it was to see you and your ma havin' a good time this journey, and I 'm dreadful sorry I missed it; but the rest of the road 's prime, an' I jes' hope you 'll forgit this mishap."

"O Miles! I ought n't to have come, I see it now; if I die in the wilderness, it will be because I left my home." And poor Mrs. Baird sobbed, remembering the sad, burdened look on her husband's face as she last saw him, riding off with the two led horses.

"Ma, you can blame me, if you want to," said Phœbe; "you know how I coaxed."

"You did jes' right, Miss Phœbe. Ma an' pa an' me is all agreed about that. Why, after the way Alan 's been carryin' on sence he come home to do doctorin', there was n't no livin' with him, hardly. It kep' me laughin' to see his pranks, till I seen how it was workin' fer you folks. Then I was sorry enough, and ashamed that I 'd took him off huntin' an' leavin' you at home frettin'; fer there ain't nobody in the world I 'd like to please better 'n you."

Miles's face grew red as he spoke. Then he sud-

denly turned away. The coach was ready, and Mrs. Baird still unwilling to go.

“Suppose we walk a little way,” said Don.

“Dat ’s it,” agreed Thad. “Dis yere bad road don’t las’ but a quarter mile further, ’cordin’ to Miles.”

So they went on, keeping ahead of the coach, leading their horses and helping Mrs. Baird and Phœbe, till at last Mrs. Baird was willing to re-enter the stage. Soon after this the road became so narrow that the horsemen had to fall behind.

“Mistis ’ll miss us, but dere ’s no helpin’ it. My! but Miles is sorry ’bout de way she got frightened. Little missy bore up beautiful, now did n’t she? Pore Miles, he ’mos’ los’ his head, he wuz so tuk up wid de thought o’ dem two, chiefly missy; you seen dat, Marse Don?”

“Yes,” agreed Don.

“So ’t is.” Thad was evidently proud to think of his young mistress being valued even by one beneath her. “Little missy ’ll never know it, an’ it ain’t fittin’ she should, rememberin’ de fambly she come from.”

“It ’s well Miles has his mother to care for.”

“Yes, fer he can’t never git little missy; he ’s got sense ’nough to know dat.”

“Her mother ’s afraid she ’ll lose her heart to somebody in Virginia.”

Thad laughed. “Mistis don’t know as much as I does, or she would n’t be afeard o’ dat. Strange she don’t, too; I ’s never heerd a wud on de subjec’ any more ’n her, but it ’s plain as day to me. Little missy ’s los’ her heart a’ready, you know dat, Marse Don.”

Only Don’s silence gave consent, but Thad understood. He liked to air his views to Don, and was glad of the opportunity.

“An’ him wid no heart to gib her, ’cause it ’s los’ to somebody else dat ’ll never know it any mo’ ’n him ’ll know ’bout little missy holdin’ him so dear, an’ never breathin’ it to anybody. It ’s jes’ a secret ’tween you an’ me, Marse Don.”

“Yes, I understand, Thad. We must be glad that Phoebe is happy in her love to her mother.”

“Yes, an’ Miles ’s got his ma, an’ Marse Hugh ’s got de Injun wuk, but dey ain’t any of ’em got jes’ what dey hankered fer, ’cep’ on’y Dr. George an’ little Miss Alice. I been studyin’ on dis p’int a good bit, an’ it seems cur’us.”

“Yes, it does,” agreed Don. “Now the road ’s wider, I ’ll ride by the coach awhile.”

Thad still meditated on the subject which inter-

ested him. "Dere ain't eber no need to 'splain things to Marse Don; half a wud 's 'nough fer him, or he knows it befo' han', prob'ly; seems a drefful pity dat so many folks mus' be crossed in love, but so 't is. An' Marse Don 'll be in de same fix hisse'f 'fore long, like as not; fo' sho he will if he gwinter set his heart on Marse Leigh's sister, fer, 'cordin' ter Jubal's way o' thinkin', dar 's somebody else dat 's sho to git her. Marse Don 's bline fer oncet, if he ain't got no inklin' o' dat."

None of the other travellers had minded the upset as Mrs. Baird and Phœbe had. To them it was only one of the day's events which they were able soon to forget. Mrs. Baird tried to be interested in the conversation. They were passing through a region which showed evidences of an earthquake, long past, however.

"Look at those sink-holes," said Mr. Jenkins; "the 'quake made them. Those pretty grassy basins lying along the road are really dangerous places."

"Some of 'em has springs in 'em," said a farmer. "If you 'd dig down you might come to a cave, maybe."

"And here's a regular earthquake crack," said Mr. Jenkins. "It 's well our road is n't any nearer."

All looked with interest as they passed several fissures a foot or two wide and some yards in length.

"I felt those shocks myself," said Mr. Jenkins. "They came just when the last war was beginning. The two happening together made some folks think the world was about coming to an end. Many people were so frightened that they began to go to church."

"I remember those days," said another traveller. "We had more meetin's than ever before. When there was n't a church they were held in the open air. People camped in wagons and tents. Two or three ministers would come maybe, and hold the meetin' for several days. They were solemn times, too."

"And then, again," said Mr. Jenkins, "some very curious occurrences took place down our way. I've heard my father, who was a preacher, tell how some persons were afflicted by a singular kind of bodily exercise called the jerks. It would come on while they were sitting in church during service, or in the midst of the congregation if service was out in the open air. Violent contortions of the whole body would take place, and continue in the most rapid succession, backward and forward, and seeming to exercise every muscle; this would

last until the person afflicted became exhausted, and sank down in a fainting condition, from which he would gradually recover. When the fit would come on it was common for two strong men to take hold of the person, one by each arm, and hold him until it was ended; for there was danger of the sufferer being injured against a tree or bench or wall, or any one near. The fit seemed to come on involuntarily, and those attacked had no power to resist it."

Mr. Jenkins's story was listened to with deep attention.

"I can believe every word you say," said the woman in the corner; "for I had an aunt subject to those fits. She seemed to regard it as a kind of judgment. She said there was no religion in it."

"No, it would seem not; but I don't pretend to speculate on the subject."

"My father had a more curious tale to tell than yours, Mr. Jenkins," said another traveller. "He said there was a strange kind of exercise in this country in the time of his youth; it was called the dancing exercise. It came on people in church; and they would involuntarily rise, and dance rapidly. I don't remember that he said how long it lasted, or how the fit went off; but so it was that many

pious people were disposed to censure those who were the subjects of it.

“Among those who condemned the involuntary dances was an old man of good standing and influence, who had often spoken against them. One day, in the spring of the year, this man was employed in making tobacco-hills, to set his plants in. He was reflecting about the dancing exercise, when suddenly he commenced dancing; and, in spite of all his efforts to restrain it, he continued to dance incessantly until he had danced or kicked down nearly all the hills he had made, and until he was very much exhausted. At length the fit left him, when he returned to his house to rest. After that he was careful not to say much about the involuntary dancers.”

“I reckon not, he ’d had his lesson.”

These tales led to a long and animated discussion, to which tired Mrs. Baird did not listen. She had changed seats with Phœbe, because it made her more nervous to look at the road.

As darkness came on she went to sleep; but Phœbe looked with wide-awake eyes at the steep cliffs and deep hollows which the moonlight revealed, and wondered how Miles could carry them safely over such a narrow road.

Don and Thad kept behind, carefully watching their horses' steps.

"Dis hoss am one dat Marse Alan fetched fum de ole doctor's," remarked Thad, "an' he coaxed his pa inter swappin' him fer one o' his'n; an' I hab ter be mighty pertic'lar, not bein' used ter him."

"It seems as if he might give you trouble."

"Yes, sah, till I git all his tricks larnt. An' dis am a mighty pore place fer studyin' a new hoss."

At last the travellers reached the stopping-place, where they found a good supper and comfortable beds.

"This seems to be the best part of the journey, Phoebe," said Mrs. Baird, as she laid her tired head on her pillow.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAD'S PERIL.

"I FEEL better," said Mrs. Baird, the next morning; "really, Phœbe, I 'm not so tired as when I started yesterday."

"That 's how Mrs. Pratt said it would be. And we 'll have a good day, see how bright the sun is, ma. I feel that we 're having a real holiday."

And Mrs. Baird and Phœbe took their seats in the stage, both looking bright and cheerful.

Thad, riding beside Don, said, "It gwinter rain 'fo' sundown, Marse Don, I know de signs; but 't ain't no use pesterin' mistis 'bout it 'fo'han'."

"No, let her be as happy as she can."

It was Don's last day with the stage, after that his road would lie in another direction. He rode beside the window; and as Mrs. Baird and Phœbe watched his bright face and listened to his cheery voice, they wondered how they could travel without him.

"How we shall miss you, Don," said Mrs. Baird; "I can't bear to think about it."

"Then don't, Mrs. Baird; there 'll be something new to interest you to-morrow; it 's always so in a stage journey, — new passengers, new sights."

"Yes, beautiful sights," said Phœbe. "Mrs Pratt said our road lay through very romantic scenes."

"That means dangerous, child! Climbing mountains, fording rivers! I 'd sooner travel a level road, with nothing to look at but sky and grass."

"Any road 's good, ma, that has Aunt Rachel at the end."

"Yes, Phœbe, and the old home, that I had despaired of seeing; that ought to reconcile me to the hardships of the way."

Phœbe gazed at everything with wide-open eyes. Every turn of the road revealed new beauties, every passing traveller afforded food for speculation.

A wagon drawn by two horses was seen not far off on a cross-road. The man and boy sitting in it were looking about as if they, too, were in a new world.

"Why, Phœbe," cried Don, "that 's Mr. Yost! and Jerry! I wonder what brings them so far from home. O Mrs. Baird! don't you want to see them?"

"To be sure I do. They were always so kind to Alan!"

Don hastened to overtake them. He was the

only one in the party who had ever seen the Yosts; but Miles Hardy and Thad, as well as Phœbe and her mother, knew all about them, and were pleased at the thought of meeting them.

“How glad they are to see Don!” said Phœbe; “and how much they have to say; it looks as if they could n’t talk fast enough.”

“And they want to see us, for they ’re turning this way.”

Thad hurried forward, and helped to turn the wagon in the narrow road.

“Something ’s the matter with Jerry,” said Phœbe, on a nearer view. “See, he is propped up with pillows.”

They met at the crossing. Miles stopped the stage. The passengers were entertained by the encounter; anything new interested them.

“Howdy, ma’am,” said Mr. Yost to Mrs. Baird at the stage window. “I ’m powerful glad to meet Mr. Alan’s ma. An’ be this little Miss Phœbe, that we used to hear tell of? My! my! Jerry, jes’ look here; she ’s a growed up young lady, purty as a picter!”

Jerry’s eyes sparkled as he smiled on Phœbe, who looked at him with pity, for she saw that he was a suffering invalid.

"It 's been a long time since Mr. Alan rid up our way fer to go to college."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Baird; "you 'd think so if you saw him now. Why, he 's turned into a doctor."

"You hear that, Jerry? I allow he 'd like to have the curin' of you."

"Dr. Ken Craig 's the one I want."

"What 's happened to Jerry, Mr. Yost?" asked Mrs. Baird.

"Got hurt terrible bad by his horse throwin' him an' then rollin' atop of him."

"Oh, how dreadful!"

"'T was in a big hunt we was havin', an' Jerry was goin' ahead of everybody; he 's growed to be a fine hunter; beats the world at it."

"I can't do it no more, pa, not since I 've lost poor Bouncer; 't was him led the hunts."

"Never mind, Jerry; once your back and leg git well again, we 'll come across another tip-top horse, — I 'm on the lookout a'ready."

"An' I feel a heap pearter, pa, jes' from Mr. Don tellin' me how to get to Dr. Ken's. We 'll go straight to Chilhowee. The horses is headin' the right way now, ain't they, Mr. Don?"

"Yes, Jerry; and to-morrow you 'll be there. Take

him straight to the parsonage, Mr. Yost. Father and mother will be glad as can be to see you both; they can never forget how kind you have been to all us boys. And Ken will come as fast as he can ride when he hears you 're there."

"I know that. Oh! we 've been hankerin' bad to see Dr. Ken ever since Jerry got hurt, thinkin' he could cure him; but we heard tell there was no chance of him, for he was 'way off to Phil'delphy, 'tendin' hundreds of sick folks in a hospital."

"So he was till just a little while ago, but now he 's home again."

"That 's the best news I 've heard in many a day. Why, Jerry, we was takin' our little trip jes' in the nick o' time, seein' we was to meet Mr. Don on the road all so sudden. We was ridin' fer salt," — Mr. Yost addressed the stageful of passengers, for all were listening; "it seems as if salt 's about the hardest thing to get in the world, anyway to folks that lives fur from the works, an' has a good lot of stock to feed an' meat to pickle."

"You 're a long ways out of your road if you was bound fer the salt-works," said Miles Hardy.

"Yes; we was travellin' about some jes' to see the sights. Jerry 's been kept home so long that his eyes is achin' fer somethin' new."

"I can shut 'em now, pa, till we get to Chilhowee. To-morrer I 'll be there!" Jerry's face beamed with happiness. "I 've been hankerin' to see it this long time. Why, Mr. Don, I 'll see your pa an' ma an' that little sister of yours, an' the church where your pa preaches. Oh! won't ma an' Malindy an' the boys wish they 'd come along?"

"Only Mr. Hugh won't be there," said Mr. Yost. "It does beat all, Mr. Don, to hear of his goin' to live among the Indians, an' likin' it."

"He loves his work, Mr. Yost."

"Pa, if Mr. Hugh can live in a wigwam, you would n't be afraid to let me try it; now, would you? an' I 'd jes' love to hear him preach. Le 's take that road for our next trip."

"Your boy seems to think he 's in for a big holiday," said Mr. Jenkins.

"I 'm that pleased to see him beginnin' to get peart, after bein' bad so long, that I 'low I 'll not say 'no' to nothin' he asks."

"A big dose of happiness is about the best med'cine there is in this here world," said the stout farmer.

"An' them cattle 'll maybe find a lick on your own place if they get powerful hungry fer salt before you get back with some," said the other farmer.

"Would n't that be luck, pa?" said Jerry.

"Yes; 't would be the makin' of us to have salt-works of our own, to be sure."

"Such things has happened," said the farmer. "Dumb beasts is knowin' critters sometimes."

At parting Miles said, "Be sure to stop at that baitin'-place I told you about, Mr. Yost. There 's where we was last night. Tell 'em I sent you, an' they 'll treat you tip-top."

Then eager Jerry began his journey on the Chilhowee road, while Miles cracked his whip, and the stage went briskly the opposite way.

"'T wuz a blessin' we met dem folks," said Thad to Don. "Dat pore boy 'mos' feels as if he was on his feet ag'in, he 's that set up with thinkin' of what Dr. Ken can do fer him."

"Yes, so I see. And his father 's just as full of hope. Well, Ken can do wonders, I know. And there 's Dr. Pratt at his call, with his skill and long experience. Oh! I really think Jerry has his best chance."

Mrs. Baird watched the gathering clouds with dread. "There 's no way for us to escape this storm, Phœbe. This slow lumbering coach will be stranded in the midst of it, I 'm afraid."

"I sha 'n't mind, ma, just so you keep dry; and Miles says the stage is waterproof."

The first drops fell as they alighted at the half-way house, where dinner awaited them. By the time they had dined, the rain poured in torrents.

"O Phœbe! I wish we did n't have to go. I think Miles ought to wait till the worst 's over. I wish I could get hold of him to persuade him."

"This is not a thunder-storm, ma. It 's only rain. I do hope you won't mind it, for Miles can't stop; Don says so."

"No," said Mr. Jenkins. "This stage goes, rain or shine; that 's the beauty of it to us business men, anyway for one that 's got to 'tend court. This young stage-driver comes and goes like a clock, and he 's getting a name for punctuality and reliability that 's going to be the making of him."

"I 'm glad to hear it," said Mrs. Baird; "for he 's from our neighborhood."

"Well, he certainly seems to have found his vocation."

When they re-entered the stage, every window was shut, every curtain snugly fastened down.

"You 'll have to do without much sight-seeing this afternoon, miss," said the fat farmer to Phœbe. "This kind of a pour-down makes things look blacker than night."

"And we can't even see what dangers we are getting into, shut in as we are," said Mrs. Baird.

"That may be just as well," said the woman in the corner. "My heart 's not apt to quake so much when I travel with my eyes shut as when I look at the road."

The rain beat against the stage on all sides, the wind whistled and howled in the tree-tops, great branches pounded the roof; at intervals Miles's voice could be heard urging his horses. The passengers whiled away the time by telling tales of peril, each more fearful than the last.

Mrs. Baird clung to Phœbe, trembling, but struggling for self-control. "We can't even get help from Don or Thad, shut up as we are in this dreadful den."

"Oh, yes, we can if we need them, ma! they said they 'd keep as near as possible to the stage."

The two horsemen were having a troublesome time in the rain, principally on account of Thad's unsatisfactory horse. Don tried in vain to help him.

"Dis bad weather 'pears to 'a' put mischief inter de pore critter's head. I sutenly never seen such a bolter an' kicker in all my bo'n days. Marse Don, you better not try to keep along-sider me; dis hoss am askin' fer a wide berth."

"Mr. Baird ought never to have started you to ride to Virginia on such an animal."

"No; an' I kinder sorter think I 'll never git dar on him, nuther. But massa an' mistis was both so took by de good looks of de beast, dat Marse Alan got him off his han's mighty easy; swapped him fer dat ugly ole hoss I useter ride to mill, pore Boneset. I wish I wuz on him now, 't would be jes' play to ride him after dis 'sperience. I dassent let mistis know 'bout it, fer she 's got a heap too much trouble a'ready. De rain makes dis road awful slippy, Marse Don; better take care how Buncombe steps, fer here comes a mighty narrer place on de edge of dis big cliff."

"I can trust Buncombe for being sure-footed."

"Oh! I orter hab Boneset fer travellin' like dis! I 'd 'light an' walk; 't would be a heap easier, but dis hoss would lose hisse'f in 'bout a minute if he had de chance. I mus' be allus holdin' him in. Dar! dar! Marse Don, he 's a-goin' som 'ers! Pore mistis!"

The fractious horse dashed wildly on, as if to pass the stage, just where the road was too narrow. For a moment it seemed certain that the horse would dash against the stage, but Thad's efforts caused him to swerve to one side; and, the road

being slippery and the animal off his balance, both he and his rider toppled over the cliff, greatly to Don's horror. He was the only witness. He heard Thad's terrified cries as he fell, "Marse Don! Marse Don! help! help! Pore mistis! missy! far'well!" The last words sounded far away, and the crash that followed was terrible to hear. Don lifted up his voice, as he urged Buncombe forward.

"Halloo, Miles, halloo! Stop, stop! Thad's over the cliff!" There was no hiding this new and dreadful trouble from Mrs. Baird, who screamed with terror and distress as she heard Don's startling cry.

"O Phœbe, Phœbe! what in the world will become of us! Thad's dead, of course he's dead, and we can't get along without him; he's all we had left of all my property, oh!" and in her excitement she tried to get out of the coach, convulsed with sobs as she was.

"O ma! stay here," urged Phœbe. "Don will see about him, and Miles, — everybody will help."

"Certainly we will," said Mr. Jenkins. "You'd better keep your ma in the coach, miss. She can never get to the poor fellow; the cliff's a hundred feet or more to the bottom."

"Oh, oh! and he had my money! for safe keep-

ing! all my money! Why, Phœbe, we've lost everything!" Mrs. Baird's distress knew no bounds; she clung to Phœbe, and wailed bitterly.

All was commotion in the stage and out of it. The men had hastened to the rescue, all but Miles, who could not leave his horses on such a dangerous part of the road, especially with Mrs. Baird and Phœbe in the stage. He gave the men a strong rope, which he kept for emergencies. Mrs. Baird hid her face, and tried not to hear what was going on; it was all too dreadful.

"Oh! I ought never to have come this journey, Phœbe. I said so yesterday, and now I am surer than ever. How can I live through it?"

The other women did not know how to comfort her, and neither did Miles, who feared the worst for Thad.

The rescuers hurried to the scene of the accident. Don had dismounted, and was peering down over the cliff, calling to Thad, whose horse could be seen lying in a heap at the bottom.

"Thad's holding on somewhere down there," said Don. "Don't you hear him? He spoke to me. He wants a rope; he's holding on to a sapling, and it's breaking loose. Oh, you've got one; I'm so glad!"

It was well the men were strong. They lowered the rope, which Thad managed to catch, and then they hauled him up. Thad reached the top much bruised and strained, but with whole bones.

"Bless de Lord!" he gasped, as he sank down on the bank beside Don.

"O Thad, I 'm glad to see you safe!"

"Marse Don, I thought it wuz far'well fer sho."

"You made a very narrow escape, my good fellow," said Mr. Jenkins.

"How in the world did you manage to get free from the horse instead of going to the bottom with him?" asked the burly farmer.

"'T wuz a miracle, sho! I wuz prayin' fo' mistis; an' I jes' sprung fer dat saplin', an' den I heard de pore hoss's bones breakin' down on dem rocks. Well, I rid him too long as 't wuz."

"Yes," said Mr. Jenkins. "He was a fractious beast, a good horse to lose if you knew how to do without him."

"Massa an' mistis 'll count it a big loss. Dear knows I 'm sorry fer it." Thad looked greatly troubled at thought of the dead horse. "Dis am sutenly a terrible mishap."

"It 's to be hoped it won't be visited on the poor man," said one farmer to the other. "Some

niggers would run away if they was in a scrape like this."

"Yes, there 's plenty of hiding-places about here."

"Oh, I could n't never leave mistis ner little missy! no, never," protested Thad. "Marse Don knows dat."

"Yes, Thad, I certainly do. And you 're not in any scrape, for it was n't your fault. I saw it all. Mrs. Baird will be too glad to know you 're safe to think much about the horse."

"An' I ain't 'sponsible to massa ner Marse Alan, thank God. I belongs to mistis. An' dar am de stage, an' mistis an' missy lookin' out fer me, an' wavin' der han'kerchers in all dis rain. Marse Don, won't you jes' git to 'em quick on Buncombe, an' tell 'em dat de money-belt am safe. I wuz 'fraid 't would bust in all de rumpus." Thad whispered this important message.

"I 'll tell them. But I want to lend you Buncombe. Can't you scramble up now?"

"Thanky, Marse Don. There's Miles hollerin' to us. I 'd ruther you 'd go on. I kin creep along the road someway. Cur'ous how I feel so kinder shook to pieces."

"You got some bad bruises, I 'm afraid."

"I mus' 'a' knocked ag'in de cliff consid'able."

"You 'll have to ride Buncombe, anyhow, till we catch up to the stage."

They helped Thad to mount. "I 'm right down sorry dat all you gemmen had ter git so wet an' muddy on 'count o' me," he said. He was cheered by the evident joy of his two mistresses at sight of him; Mrs. Baird wept tears of thankfulness.

Miles made him welcome to a seat beside himself on the stage-box. "It 's a big climb fer a bad knee," he said; "but you 're a heap surer of gittin' to Virginny, settin' still an' comfortable up here, than when you was atop of that poor beast."

Presently the sun shone out, and there was a glorious rainbow. It seemed a new world to Phoebe. The road was better, so Don could ride beside the stage.

"How can we finish this dreadful journey without you, Don?" said Mrs. Baird. "Every day brings some new mishap."

"My being along has n't hindered them one bit."

"And after all, ma, we 're sitting here as comfortable as can be, with everything beautiful to look at, and Thad safe again. Oh! I don't see why we can't be happy."

"Well, child, I am when I remember about poor Thad, and how every turn of the wheels takes me

nearer my old home. But, oh ! the hours seem countless since we started. It 's hard to believe it 's only been two days."

"The time 's seemed short to me," said Phœbe. "Miles says we 'll travel till late this evening; and I 'm glad, since the moon will shine."

"O Phœbe ! you make me wish I was young again; there was a day when I liked travelling, too."

But even Phœbe was tired and hungry and sleepy by the time they reached the inn.

The next morning Don left his friends. Now indeed he felt that he was starting on a real holiday, where the world was new, and all that was in it. What would he find on this grand pleasure trip to which he had so long looked forward ?

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS HADASSAH'S VISIT.

WHEN Alan and Nettie first met Miss Hadassah on the road, with her two servants, they tried to make light of the fact that Mrs. Baird and Phoebe had just forsaken their home on account of her coming.

"I 'll soon make things straight about ma, Nettie," Alan had said. "I know how to tackle your aunt." He had always been a great favorite with Miss Hadassah. After the first greetings, he said in his lightest, most off-hand manner, "See that stage-coach just starting, Miss Hadassah? You 'll be surprised to hear that ma and Phoebe are in it, going on a pleasure-jaunt to Virginia."

"That 's certainly very strange news, Alan," said Miss Hadassah. "I always understood that your mother was something of a fixture, and I did n't expect to be disappointed about seeing her, of all people. And now sha' n't I even get a glimpse of her, or of your sister?"

"Not unless the stage would stop. And I know

it won't, as it is Miles Hardy's coach. Time was when I could wind that fellow round my finger. He 'd mind me like a dog. But he 's different now; I don't know what 's done it, stage-driving, maybe; anyhow, I 'm not his master any longer. All the hallooing I could do would n't make him wait till we got there."

"I tried hard to coax ma to stay, auntie," said Nettie, "anyhow till the next stage, for I knew how you 'd feel; but Phœbe was so impatient for that visit to her Aunt Rachel that she would not give ma any peace, so she really could n't do anything but go."

"Yes, Miss Hadassah," added Alan, "it was Phœbe's doing. But we had n't any idea ma could be persuaded into taking such a journey; and when we knew she was really going, it was too late to send you word, or we certainly should have done so."

"I should have been glad to know, Alan. I fear I have come at an inopportune time; but it was of your own choosing." Miss Hadassah looked severe or puzzled, Alan could not decide which; but he was glad of an excuse to leave her.

"I shall have to fall behind, Nettie; there 's pa tugging along with those two led horses, and I promised Phœbe I 'd look after Bramble."

"You can leave Nettie well enough, Alan," said her aunt; "for here are Watson and Laney, who took care of her long before you ever saw her." The two house-servants accompanying Miss Hadassah smiled their broadest on their pretty young mistress, whom they had not seen since her wedding day. They had, of course, been interested listeners to Alan's remarks.

"Auntie, I hope you won't mind ma's being away," said Nettie, as they rode on. "She really needed the change. All her friends said so."

"Oh! I don't intend to mind it, Nettie. Of course it was a surprise to me. But I already feel reconciled, for now I shall have you to myself almost as much as if you were in your own house. I did not intend to make you a visit till you were there; but since your people are so bad off for clothes, of course it was n't best to wait."

"There 's really not so much hurry since ma 's gone. It was she who was fretting about it. But I 'm real glad you 've come, auntie."

"So am I. I can't tell you how I 've missed you, child; and I 'm looking forward to having a delightful time with you, for here 's Laney to do the sewing. Watson has a piece of homespun in his pack, and we 'll soon get things straight."

Mr. Baird and Alan overtook Miss Hadassah's party, and, finding her in a serene mood, soon all were gay. Alan, though he led Bramble, contrived to keep near enough to maintain a lively conversation, and pointed out everything of interest on the road; and their guest reached the house in fine spirits. Alan considered it quite a successful ride.

"We 're managing very well without ma," he boasted to Nettie, in a leisure moment after their return.

"Yes, so far. But I 'm trembling for the dinner, for everything 's left to Jen."

"Well, your aunt will understand that you could n't help it; we had to see ma off in the stage-coach, for it was only once in a lifetime."

"Yes; and auntie was so delighted to be met that it seemed very fortunate that we were all there."

"That long ride has made us all hungry as bears, so maybe we can tolerate Jen's bad cooking for once."

"For once! If that was all, it would n't so much matter; but it 'll be for all the time ma 's away, think of that! and while auntie 's here is worse still."

"I reckon she knows what to expect of Jen."

"I know she expects a good dinner, and she 'll certainly be disappointed."

Nettie was right. The dinner was a complete failure, at which she was very much mortified, and tried to apologize.

"Jen 's a horrid cook, auntie. I think it must be from having had such small experience; but it 's too bad that she should give us a dinner we can't eat to-day, after your long journey, when you must be so hungry. It really looks as if she meant to starve you."

"Well, never mind, child. A poor dinner is a rare thing to me, you know. But I pity you if you have had to put up with such dishes as these often."

"Oh! we have n't, Miss Hadassah," said Alan hastily, thinking to retrieve the family credit. "We don't know what poor cooking is any more than you do. Ma 's made sure of that."

"We have a first-class cook in Thad," said Mr. Baird.

"Yes, auntie," said Nettie. "We 'll miss his dinners. You 'd be well off if Thad was here. But ma was n't satisfied without taking him along with her; and now I 'm really in despair over Jen, for I reckon she 's forgotten everything she ever knew."

Ma and Thad used to drive her out of the kitchen. She 's only been cooking for Tip and the pickaninies this long time."

"I thought she had the making of a good cook in her, Nettie, when I started her off here with you. She was in our kitchen some time. I remember I gave her a few lessons myself."

"So I told ma. But somehow she was always better satisfied to do without her help. She said she 'd sooner Jen was away in her quarter, taking care of her children. Ma liked quiet, of all things."

"I don't wonder, if she often had to listen to such a racket as those little nigs are keeping up in the dooryard. Why, Alan, they 're actually racing on the porch. I wonder you permit it."

"They know ma 's away," said Alan.

"And have forgotten that I 'm here. That won't be for long." Miss Hadassah looked grim.

"I told Till to keep them quiet," said Nettie; "but her mother seems to want her in the kitchen."

"Preparing another course of this delectable repast," thought Miss Hadassah, who was too polite to make further audible comment on the dinner. But later in the day, when she had her niece to herself, she spoke freely, and did not rest till she understood all.

"Really, Nettie, I 'm surprised at your sending for me. I never imagined you were so cramped for room. Your letters gave no hint of it. If Phœbe had n't found it convenient to go away just as I came, where could you have put me?"

Nettie hesitated, and looked somewhat chagrined. "I don't know, auntie. Alan said there was no need to bother about that, for his ma was such a good manager she could easily fix it."

"Well, Nettie! The way I see it, Mrs. Baird and Phœbe actually went away to make room for me. Why, child, I 'm so mortified that I 've half a mind to start for home with Watson to-morrow."

Nettie began to cry. "O auntie! and leave me with Jen! You know she can't cook, and I can't teach her. It 's been just like a delightful visit ever since I came to Chilhowee till now. Ma and Phœbe did everything to make it pleasant; and Thad kept things going. I don't see how we 'll get along without him. None of our people seem to be of much account."

"So it appears. I'm sorry for it. But they 're all strong and healthy, and can learn, I 'm sure. They seemed the right ones for you to take away with you, for they were your mother's property."

"Yes, I know; and Alan 's pleased to own a

whole family, and Sol besides. But ma says they 're nothing but a bother, and I agree with her when it comes to their needing clothes."

"They certainly are ragged. I 'm surprised that their clothes went so soon. But, really, Nettie, I wish you had managed about them without sending for me, since you 're not in your own house."

"How could I, auntie?" pouted Nettie. "I did n't know the first thing to do."

"You could at least have bought a piece of domestic at the settlement, and made a dress for Jen, or showed Till how to do it. That girl had better be sewing for her mother than playing ball. I 've been watching her ever since we began talking. She 's been sitting on a bench beside the beehive mending a ball—now she is tossing it with Tray."

"I want her to practise; sometimes she is the only one I can get to play with. She 's my maid, you know, auntie; and I don't see how I can spare her to sew for all her mother's family. Why, she 'd never be done, and I 'm always finding something for her to do for me."

"O Nettie, what a child you still are! You make me ashamed. I was in hopes you had bloomed out into a competent mistress. But I see they 've just made a pet of you here as we did at home."

"Yes; ma would n't let me undertake any duties. She said it would be time enough when I got into my own house."

"When will that be? I 'd be out of patience waiting for it."

"That 's like ma. Alan says he really thinks he could have made a start on it by this time, if it had n't been for the unexpected hindrance of getting ma off in a hurry. But it can't wait forever, for ma said positively that she won't come back till we 're in our new house."

"Ah, that 's how it is." Miss Hadassah was beginning to realize Mrs. Baird's desperate predicament. "And here she 's been doing everything for you, even the cooking. You need n't say no, Nettie."

"Well, Phœbe helped, and Thad."

"How could he ever find time? I don't wonder his mistress needed a change, and took him along. Phœbe deserves credit for pushing the plan through. I 'm sorry to miss them all. I 'm beginning to think they are the best part of the family. I hope you or somebody will tell Mrs. Baird from me, when you write, that I think she was perfectly justified in leaving home. I should certainly have done it myself under such circumstances."

"It will make her feel better to hear it, auntie.

Poor ma was sorry as could be about going this morning. But Phoebe coaxed so hard that she got her off. We really did n't believe she 'd go."

Mr. Baird and Alan, smoking their pipes on the porch, felt rather gloomy over the turn affairs had taken.

"We 're making a poor exchange for ma, Alan," said his father, "getting Miss Hadassah and her tribe instead. What in the world shall we do with them?"

"Oh! I reckon they 'll find out how to take care of themselves. There 's one good thing, Watson 'll keep Tip going. He 'll mind him better than he did Thad; and I intend to see if they can't make a start at that clearing. I 'd like Miss Hadassah to take home word that we 're working for the new house. I 'll spare Sol to help, too."

"What 'll you spare him from? going hunting with you? He does n't do much else."

"Well, the hunting 's going to be more important than ever, now. We must have plenty of game for the table while Miss Hadassah 's here. I was long enough up at the doctor's to know what she likes. But I can go out without Sol if I must. How I miss Miles. He never used to fail me when I wanted a hunt."

"I reckon we 'll need Sol about the place to help do Thad's work, for Watson 's going home to-morrow, so he tells me."

"Why, pa! I was thinking he 'd take charge here while Miss Hadassah stays. We shall miss ma and Thad, sure enough."

"And Phœbe. I reckon we 'll find she was of some account, too."

"I wondered how Dr. Thompson could spare Watson. But how will Miss Hadassah get home unless he waits to tote her?"

"He 's coming back when she sends for him. The idea was that if she found she and Laney could get through with the people's clothes in a hurry, Watson could stay till she was ready to go; but there 's no telling now when that 'll be, for she 's going to teach Jen to cook before she does anything else. Laney 's in the kitchen now, so as to make sure Miss Hadassah has something fit to eat for supper."

"Well, pa!" laughed Alan, "we 've got more than we bargained for. But Nettie won't care how long her aunt stays. And I 'm certainly ready for that supper, after Jen's dinner."

Alan and his father found that a new order of things had begun when Miss Hadassah took the

helm. She even ruled them after a fashion, keeping them always on the alert regarding Sol and Tip, who needed much oversight in their work.

She made no critical or disparaging remarks; but Mr. Baird had a feeling that she did not hold him in very high esteem, and felt impelled, for his own credit, to exert himself more than formerly. Alan tried to keep in Miss Hadassah's good graces, and thought he was doing his best; but he found his task harder here at home than in the days he had spent under her roof, a light-hearted medical student.

"I declare, pa," said Alan one day, as they were riding together, "if I had known how things were going to turn out, I could n't have been bribed to invite Miss Hadassah to make this visit. Why, I feel as if I had to mind my P's and Q's the whole time, for fear she 'll tell on me when she goes home! And I 've not got a soul to growl to about it but you, pa." Alan laughed, but not with his usual light-heartedness.

"You are in a predicament; can't even confide in Nettie?"

"Not when she has her aunt at her elbow. She tells her everything. My! how I wish our folks had n't gone away till this visit was over! Ma could have managed some way, I 'm sure. Then we

should have made a better show. And it was important, I can tell you! It would have helped me to stand well with the doctor."

"I don't think you 're the one to complain, Alan. In my opinion you 'll not get right with the doctor nor his sister so long as you don't lift a finger towards building your new house. I 'm beginning to get my eyes open about it."

"Well, pa, it 's not my fault, I 'm sure, that I can't give any thought to the house now. Don't you see how Miss Hadassah demands my time? She seems to expect me to be constantly dancing attendance on her. It looks as if Nettie and she had both forgotten that I ought to be devoting myself to my profession."

"Building up a practice at last, hey? You 'd like your father-in-law to think that patients are flocking to you, but Miss Hadassah will take home a different story. There 's nothing like having somebody about that can tell tales."

"Yes; it 's a bother to think of it. But Miss Hadassah 's always been my friend. I reckon I can trust her still; and really it 's well that I have n't many calls for my services just now, when I must be fetching in game for Miss Hadassah, or carrying her and Nettie out sight-seeing or visiting every

day. They 're enjoying themselves; we may be glad of that."

"Yes; Miss Hadassah seems in high feather since she finds Chilhowee is inclined to be sociable. I knew our friends would n't neglect her."

One evening Alan was escorting Nettie and her aunt home from a call on Janet Murray. As they entered Baird's lane they met Tip riding in great haste.

"O massa! am dat you?" he cried. "I wuz goin' after you. Massa Baird he sont me, 'kase Sol hab done broke his arm an' bu'st his head open."

"What 's that, Tip?" exclaimed Alan, but did not wait for response. "Nettie, you and your aunt won't mind my leaving you, since we 're just home." Then he hurried on with Tip.

"We may be needed, Nettie," said her aunt, urging her horse forward.

"Oh! I wish I had n't come home," said Nettie; "I hate such things."

They found Sol on the porch settle, crying and groaning. His fellow-servants stood around him.

"How in the world did this happen? can you tell me, pa?" asked Alan as he strode across the porch, leaving his father to help the ladies dismount.

The negroes were all eager with tales of the accident, but Till's voice was the loudest.

"Bramble throwed him an' den kicked him, dat 's how Sol got hurted, massa."

"Yes, Alan," said Mr. Baird. "Sol mounted Bramble, though Miss Phœbe had positively forbidden him to do it. What do you think of that?"

"He 's well punished for his disobedience, pa. He 's in a heap of trouble now. Here, Sol, let me see where you 're hurt. Which arm is it? Jen, fetch a basin of water so I can see how bad this cut on his head is."

"You sha' n't cut off my arm, Doc Alan, nor sew up my head; no, you sha' n't!" screamed Sol, fighting Alan off with his well arm.

"I 'm not going to do either, you dunce. This is n't such a bad cut. Laney, won't you fetch a bandage, and I 'll tie it up. That ought to have been done at first."

"We were looking for you every minute, Alan," said his father; "and at last I got desperate, and started Tip off. If he had n't found you, he was going to ride for Ken or Dr. Smith."

"Why, pa! That would have been strange, when this was the first broken bone I 've had a chance to set since I started in Chilhowee. How long ago did it happen, anyhow?"

"Jes' when I wuz ridin' Bramble to water,

massa," groaned Sol. "Dat pony 's nothin' but a piece o' mischief, an' hates me like pizen."

"'Cause you all de time teasin' her," said Till. "Yes, he is, massa; an' Thad tole him to let her be, an' not darst to come a-nigh her."

"You had no business to mount her, Sol; you knew you were n't allowed to," said Alan.

"I could n't git her to de creek no other way, massa. She won't be led. She 's fer boltin' as quick as she sees me. But she can starve an' swelter fer all I cares, yes, Bramble can; I ain't goin' to do nothin' mo' fer her."

"Well, now, keep still till I reduce this fracture. That pony 's done for you for a while, I can tell you." Alan's professional pleasure in performing an operation left him when he remembered that it was his own servant who was disabled, at a time, too, when his services were extremely important.

Sol screamed and protested about the bone-setting. "You 're a-makin' me wuss, Doc Alan, heaps wuss. Le' go, I say. I 'd ruther my arm would git well widout you techin' it. Oh, oh! jes' you stop, an' leave me alone, an' I 'll tell you all about Bramble. 'T wuz n't her fault. She 's been mad at me eber sence I put a burr under her saddle when Miss Phoebe wuz goin' ridin'; jes' oncet I done it, an' dat 's de solomon truf."

“Well!” said Alan. “That was when Miss Phœbe came near being thrown! If Thad had n’t run and caught the bridle, and lifted his mistress off, she would like as not have had a broken skull!”

“I wondered what made Bramble cut such capers that day,” said Mr. Baird, “for she ’s as good a creature as ever was; but this young rascal knew her weak spot, and did n’t mind risking Miss Phœbe’s life for the sake of seeing a little fun.”

“Well, he ’ll pay up for his tricks now,” said his master. “He ’ll find there ’s no fun in a broken arm.”

Ignorant and frightened Sol resisted all Alan’s attempts to set his arm until Miss Hadassah interposed her authority. All his life he had been accustomed to obeying her, for she had been the ruling spirit at his old master’s. When he heard her voice he knew he must submit.

Mr. Baird and Alan regarded Sol’s accident as a great misfortune to themselves.

“We ’re left awfully short-handed, Alan,” said his father, as they walked up and down the garden path late in the evening, trying to solace themselves with their pipes. “Why, we ’ve got nobody but Tip to look to, and a big family to feed, eleven mouths, all told, all ready for their allowance, too. It takes

somebody forever riding to mill, and there 's no telling when Sol will be able even for that."

"No, the young scamp 's fixed for a long holiday. My! what a houseful of drones we 've got here! As you say, it 's enough to eat us out of house and home. Property is n't worth having anyhow, unless you can make some use of it. I just wish Miss Hadassah would take Jen's two youngest children back with her, and keep them till they 're big enough to work. That would please ma. But Nettie says she can't be persuaded to do it, because of the long journey."

"Of course she 'd sooner you 'd bear the trouble and expense of them as long as they 're yours. But I can tell you we lived a great deal more comfortably, and there was more done on the place, when we had just our own little family, and Thad to do everything for us, than you 're doing now. Thad 's worth all your niggers put together."

"Then he ought to be here to help us when we 're in such a scrape as this. I wonder if ma would n't send him home, pa, if she knew you had to ride to mill, and do the milking, and fetch in the vegetables. It looks as if it was going to come to that."

Mr. Baird shrugged his shoulders. "It sounds as if you think I 'll have my nose to the grindstone, sure enough. Well, if I 've got to turn drudge, I

reckon you 'll have to do your share, if you expect Miss Hadassah to still think well of you."

"Ma 's got to know of our trouble, even if it does n't do any good. I 'll say she has a heart of stone if my letter does n't move her."

"Don't bother poor ma just because Sol 's broken his arm. Really, this is the first holiday she 's had since we were married, and she might as well enjoy it."

"Oh! I 'm not going to say anything against that. It 's Thad I want. What does he need with a holiday? Loafing will just spoil him."

"I reckon not. Thad does n't know how to be idle. He 'll find something to do down there on the old place in Virginia."

When Alan's letter reached Mrs. Baird, it did not have quite the effect he had hoped. He had first faithfully recorded the message which Miss Hadassah insisted upon sending, and which was very gratifying to Mrs. Baird and Phoebe. Then came a recital of home woes, and some broad hints that Thad's return was very much desired.

Mrs. Baird read and discussed the letter with her sister and Phoebe. "To let Thad go home without me is what I shall never agree to," said she.

"Of course not," said her sister. "Even for

Alan's sake it would be an unwise thing to do; for, from what you and Phœbe tell me, his servants will never be worth anything so long as they can depend on Thad."

"Alan means that he wants us all to come home," said Phœbe; "but he knows it 's not worth while to say it while he 's still in our house."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Baird, "not while I remember how he has crowded me out. I 'm glad Miss Hadassah understands about that. I 'm pleased with her polite message. She 'll help Alan out of his tight places. She looked as if she was capable of it. And I shall have to forget that dreadful journey before I can think of starting home."

"I 'm glad you have such good reasons for being contented here, for I want you and Phœbe to stay for such a long visit as will make you almost forget Chilhowee."

"Well, you 're doing your best, Aunt Rachel," said Phœbe. "You are making it so pleasant that I don't care how long we stay."

"But I 'm anxious about our two horses," said her mother. "This letter really makes me worry more about them than about anything else. I 'm afraid they 're not being well taken care of. It would be a great loss if anything happened to them."

"Bramble 's a little beauty, Aunt Rachel, coal-black, with a coat like satin. It 's a shame Sol does n't treat her right; but I don't trust him or Tip, and I believe they 're just as bad to ma's horse. I was in hopes pa would take care of them."

"Do call Thad, Phœbe," said her mother. "Maybe after he hears the letter, he 'll tell us something to do. I wish we had our horses here to keep them safe."

"Oh! I 'm glad you did n't take the trouble to bring them," said her sister. "You don't need them in the least, with so many on the place."

Thad was in Miss Rachel's garden, trimming her roses. As Phœbe ran down the porch steps to call him, she thought of a plan, and came back, her face all in a glow.

"O ma! I want to lend Bramble to little Bessie Craig! She has no pony yet, and she 'll be glad as can be to ride her. I wish I had thought about it before we left home."

"It 's a good idea, Phœbe; and I 'll ask pa to take my horse over to Mrs. Craig. They 're short of horses since they let John have Nick, and I think they 'll be glad to have ours while we are away."

Thad listened to the letter and the plan with great interest and satisfaction.

"Send dem hosses to de possonage! why, sutenly! It 's mighty kine o' little missy to think o' doin' dat, an' 't will be de savin' o' de pore beasts, prob'ly. Sol had n't orter hab de keer o' good hosses; he knows how to spile 'em mighty quick. I know it by dat pore critter dat tumbled ober de cliff wid me. But up to de posson's dey 'll keep 'em safe, an' treat 'em right. 'T will be a big load off my mine to know dey 're dere."

"Yes, and off my mind too," said his mistress. "I 'm going to write the letter now, Thad, and let you take it to the post-office."

"I 'm so glad to get it settled that way," said Phoebe. "Now, Aunt Rachel, I 'm truly going to try to forget about home, as you want me to; for really Bramble was my greatest burden."

Thad, riding to the post, pleased himself with cogitating on the home news. "Dey's in a peck o' trouble dar, seemin'ly, an' coixin' fer to git me back to try to mend matters. Well, I belongs to mistis, thank de Lord. An' we 's heah on de ole place, where I was borned an' riz; an' Miss Rachel 's givin' us a fine time, an' I ain't hankerin' after Chilhowee now, no mo' 'n mistis or little missy am. We-all 's in de humor fer wisicatin'. But it 'pears fum dat letter dat massa 's been 'bleeged to stir

his stumps at las'; Miss Hadasser 's done some-thin' pore mistis never could,—she 's set massa goin', I declar'!"

When Mr. Baird received his wife's letter, he at once saw the wisdom of her plan; and Alan and he took the two horses to the parsonage with Mrs. Baird's messages.

"It looks as if ma had made up her mind to stay away a long time," said Alan, as they started on their errand.

"Yes, I reckon we 'll have to offer her some inducement before she 'll think of coming back, such as letting her have the use of her own house again."

"Now, pa, I don't see why you should twit me about that. I 'm sure I 'd be glad enough to see Miss Hadassah go. It 's next thing to being saddled with a mother-in-law to have her in the house. I 've found that out—a little too late, though. Here I am tied at home, not able to stir out except to please her and Nettie, while other folks can get fine holidays. Think of Don Craig still off on his journey. He 's the lucky one. He started on the same day ma did. That seems a long time ago."

"Yes; I had no idea I 'd miss your ma and Phoebe so much."

Mrs. Craig willingly accepted the loan of the horses; and Mr. Baird felt relieved, for he thought the parson's stable safer than his.

At last Miss Hadassah's visit drew to an end. Alan's people were well clothed, and Jen had been trained into a creditable cook. Then Watson came for his mistress and her sewing-woman. Nettie parted with her aunt reluctantly, and Alan was polite enough to express a hope for future visits.

"I 'm not coming again till you get into your own house, Alan," said she. "I 'm as firm about that as your mother is."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DON'S NEW WORLD.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Don was riding through the main street of the beautiful little town of Bellevue, where he had decided to spend Sunday. He looked from side to side of the broad, well-shaded thoroughfare, riding slowly, for all was new to him.

He saw houses standing in pretty gardens. Then came the court-house and market, and, farther on, the church, its bell hung in a tree near by. "We must call on the minister after we 've had our supper," said Don to Buncombe.

Beyond the church were more pretty houses. The place was very quiet. Don gave only a casual glance at the few people that he passed, till presently a picture filled his vision.

Two figures were coming down the street towards him, a lady in a blue dress, like a bit of the sky, he thought, and a black girl walking beside her, carrying a little spinning-wheel like the one on which his mother spun flax. They were on the sidewalk under



TWO FIGURES WERE COMING DOWN THE STREET TOWARDS HIM.

the shade-trees, the shadows flitted over them, and then glints of sunshine.

The young lady wore a poke bonnet of leghorn, and carried a handsome bead bag on her arm, such as Margaret had brought from the East. "She does n't belong to this part of the world," thought Don. He did not know why he watched, but his eyes seemed riveted. Just as they came opposite they entered a gate; and, in the pause of opening it, he saw that the lady's face was beautiful and wonderfully fair, far different from any Southern beauty he had ever seen.

Don forgot that he was looking for an inn, and continued his ride up the street till he came to the last house, a large gray stone in a lawn studded with trees, among which was a white winding path. A lady in a black dress and white cap walked there, a fine shepherd dog keeping pace with her.

"This is indeed a new world," thought Don. For the lady in the garden had a more stately and aristocratic air than any he had before seen.

Then he turned about, and presently found his lodging-house. In answer to his inquiries his host told him that the clergyman of the place was away from home, detained on a journey by sudden illness, that his wife and the only physican of Bellevue had

been summoned, and had gone to him that day. "So most likely we 'll be without preaching to-morrow, for it's Dr. Butler who always gets our supplies; but he had no chance this time."

After supper, Don, having nothing else to do, took a long ride to view his surroundings. In one of his turns he found himself again passing the spot where he had seen the lady with the spinning-wheel. On the porch sat several ladies, each with a little wheel, spinning in the twilight, and talking with pleasant animation. In the dim distance Don could not distinguish one from another. "Which is her voice, I wonder?"

He turned again; and, finding a creek at the end of one of the streets, he followed its windings, till presently the moon shone forth, and the water glittered and sang, making him think of Silver Creek.

When he returned to the village, lights shone in all the houses, and the streets were flooded with moonshine. A lady and gentleman passed him. "It is the lady in blue, going home," for he heard her voice, the same tones that he imagined were hers when they sounded in his ear an hour before. Her escort carried the little wheel. Don saw the shadow of the distaff and flax in the moonlight.

Later, as he sat in his room, he began to wonder

how he should spend Sunday, with no clergyman, no church service, himself a perfect stranger in the place. He had letters of introduction to a number of people, but to none here. He had expected to spend the next day with one of his college mates, but high water and bad roads had lengthened his journey.

"It must not be a wasted day. Father would write a sermon, if he could n't preach one or hear one." Don had a few sermons in his bag which his father had read and approved; but he had never preached except in Chilhowee church, and he had made no promises except to his grandfather, who was longing to hear him in the old family church.

"If father was here he would n't let this people go hungry to-morrow, but no one will expect a sermon from me. But I really think I ought to write one, rather than spend an idle day."

He opened his Bible, and turned over the leaves. "I wonder how father chooses a text." The first words that caught his eye were, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah."

Instantly he thought of the vision of the afternoon. If the blue robe was like a bit of the sky, what was its wearer? like a bit of heaven truly. Her smile made even the poor slave-girl happy; her voice — could he ever forget its charming tones?

Ah, beautiful indeed she was, as Tirzah, and fair beyond imagining. "I am glad she spins." Don did not try to explain to himself why this made him glad, or why it should affect him in any way; but many of the happiest hours of his life had been spent sitting with his mother while she spun on her little flax-wheel.

He got no farther in choosing a text that evening, or in preparing a new sermon, though he sat in deep meditation till his candle was burned nearly to the socket.

But the next morning he chose his text, "He leadeth me." Don had not listened to his father's story in vain. He believed in a Heavenly Guide. He remembered the old wonderful journey of his childhood. They often talked of it at home. Parson Craig would say, "I saw by faith through all that dangerous way the guiding cloud, the fiery pillar, and still I have my Beacon Light."

Don ordered Buncombe fed and saddled while he ate his breakfast, resolved to spend the morning in a quiet nook beside the creek with his Bible and his pocket inkstand.

There were very few guests at breakfast. While still at the table, the host entered with an anxious face.

"It 's time the stage was in. Now word 's come that they 've had a terrible upset just as they were getting into town; coach broke and passengers all shaken up."

"Coming down the hill, the other side of the stone house, was n't it?" asked one of the guests.

"Yes, it 's a very rough road just there; needs mending. They say one man was taken up for dead, but we 'll hope that 's not true. The passengers are walking the balance of the way."

Don felt thankful that it was not Miles's coach, with Mrs. Baird in it.

Then an excited voice was heard outside, asking for the doctor in breathless haste.

"That 's Mrs. Hamilton's Chloe!" and the landlord hurried out. The guests heard the conversation through the open door.

"What 's happened at Mrs. Hamilton's, Chloe?"

"Dar 's a gemlen jes' bleedin' to death, an' de madam wants Dr. Butler quick. De coach upset t' other side ob our gate, an' dey ax could n't dey tote him in, 'cause 't was handy."

"One of the stage passengers, is it? Well, now, it 's dreadful that the doctor 's away, but I thought Mrs. Hamilton knew it."

"Dey 'lowed mebbe he was back by now, an' Miss

Agnes sont me flyin'. De gemlen pitched from cl'ar off de stage-coach roof, an' got 'most killed. He fell atop of a big ole mullein, an' when dey picked him up, a piece o' de stalk was stickin' in his throat. It made de ugliest kind o' hole, what 's got ter be sewed up, or he 'll die, sho; 'cause it 's bleedin' awful."

"Oh! why is n't the doctor here? Tell Mrs. Hamilton I 'll send him the minute he gets back."

"Miss Agnes tole me to git help to oncet, 't won't do to wait."

"Miss Hamilton knows there 's no other doctor in town. But hold on a minute. There 's a young man here, just come yesterday, that maybe is" —

The landlord hurried into the breakfast-room, and put the question to Don, "Are you a doctor, sir? because" —

"I heard, I know one 's needed. No; I 'm a minister."

"Well, I thought you were one or the other. If you only were both you might save a man's life to-day."

"I have sometimes sewed up wounds," admitted Don.

"Then use your skill now, by all means," urged his fellow-guests. "This seems a desperate case."

"Your horse is ready saddled, sir," said his host; "you could n't do a better deed to-day than to give your help where it 's so much needed."

Don had his little box of remedies in his saddle-bags. He was like his father in being always ready for emergencies. Not even Kenneth with all his training, nor Parson Craig with his life-experience, could do simple surgery more skilfully than Don, for he was one to whom ten talents had been given.

He mounted Buncombe without delay. Chloe had hurried away on hearing that help was coming.

"You can't miss the place, sir," said the host. "It 's at the top of Main Street, last house, stands far back, with a winding path among the trees."

"Yes, I know." Don remembered it from yesterday.

"Oh! you 've seen it. Well, Mrs. Hamilton, a widow lady from the East, lives there, and keeps a young ladies' boarding-school."

Buncombe needed no urging; he knew when his master was in haste.

"Mrs. Hamilton must be the stately lady I saw walking in the garden yesterday. We shall meet under strange circumstances," thought Don, as he sped up the street.

Soon he passed a black girl running in the same

direction, and surmised that she was the messenger whom he had heard but not seen. "At any rate she is the girl who carried the spinning-wheel yesterday. I wonder if I am to meet 'Tirzah,' beautiful 'Tirzah,' face to face; possibly she is 'Miss Agnes.' My errand begins to look more formidable, with no one to announce me, or explain matters."

But Don was not one to shrink from an important call to do good, possibly to save life; and he hastened on.

His arrival was heralded by the barking of the shepherd dog. A young man came from the house down the path. Don, throwing his bridle over the hitching-post at the gate, hurried to meet him. After a word of explanation he found himself beside the injured man. Several gentlemen, his fellow-travellers, were in the room, doing what they could for him, as were also Mrs. Hamilton and her daughter Agnes, who Don saw at a glance was 'Tirzah!'

It was a trying moment to the would-be surgeon; but Don was one whose very presence inspired confidence, and his first words and touches gave assurance of success.

Soon the stitches were placed, and bandages securely adjusted. Don had never before had such a formidable task, but he had all the help he needed.

He saw that Agnes's firm but gentle fingers did the most skilful work; and he thought how favored was the sick one to whom those beautiful white hands might minister.

Through it all the patient seemed to be unconscious; it was not known whether it was from loss of blood, or from some serious hurt which they in their inexperience could not locate.

The travellers, unable to do more, soon went to the inn; but Don, finding it would be a relief to Mrs. Hamilton if he remained, took his seat by the sufferer. The ladies flitted in and out in noiseless fashion.

Mrs. Hamilton, in gray dress and morning cap, and with such unexpected care and anxiety suddenly thrust upon her, was the same stately, dignified lady whom he had seen pacing the lawn the day before; while Agnes seemed even more like heaven, now that he saw her eyes. Was there ever such celestial blue? such sweet sympathy in every glance? The mother's eyes were far different, black, deep-set, with the sharpest and quickest of glances — eyes that could command and rule. The contrast struck Don forcibly. The son, Jasper, resembled his mother.

Once Agnes brought a bowl of arrow-root, but there was no feeding one in the invalid's state.

"His pulse grows a little better," said Don, in answer to her disappointed look. He noted the exquisite make of the china bowl in her hand, the crest, lettered in gold, and the silver spoon of the daintiest pattern. "I am glad she spins," again thought Don. He wondered that she did perform so homely a task; it seemed the one thing in common with his own plain but happy home, and the mother whom he loved beyond all other women.

The house was quiet as Sunday and sickness combined could make it. He saw from the window a group of girls, evidently the boarding scholars, strolling in the garden, talking with animation of the day's events, of course; but in the distance not a syllable nor a ripple of laughter could be heard.

He felt very anxious as he watched his patient, and wondered what more he ought to do for him. He had been told that he was a man of note, Judge Talbot, just appointed to the Supreme Court, and now on his way to take his seat; stricken down, perhaps fatally, just when his highest ambition was gratified. He was a handsome man, in the prime of life, but now swathed in bandages, pallid as death. Don sent up a prayer for him to One mightier than he.

At last the physician came. After a short con-

ference, Don was glad to leave his case with one who seemed so competent as Dr. Butler.

He rode towards the creek; he wanted the woods and water to refresh him after his unusual experience.

"This is the way we write sermons," remembering the Bible and inkstand he had put in his saddlebags. "But it's a good text. I've learned a lesson on it to-day. Wonderful leading this has been! not my own way, certainly. I'll write that sermon to preach to grandpa."

He rode up and down the bank till the dinner hour. At the inn he found Dr. Butler, just returned from his patient, and they dined together.

"The judge is improving," said Dr. Butler. "He has good prospect of pulling through; and, humanly speaking, he owes his life to you, Mr. Craig. You did your work well."

"It is a great relief to me to hear you say so. I feared it was otherwise. I never before took such formidable stitches in my small experience."

"I can believe it; but it's good to be able to do a thing like that, to be an emergency man. I hope Judge Talbot may live to thank you. He's wonderfully well fixed at Mrs. Hamilton's."

"Yes, they seem to know the best way of doing things there."

"It 's a pity such a busy household should have more care, but what a boon to a lonely man like the judge to be there; why, Miss Agnes's voice in itself will half cure him."

Before parting, Dr. Butler invited Don to preach for them that evening.

The request was so unexpected that Don hesitated. "I have scarcely begun my work. Thus far I have really sewed up more cuts than I have preached sermons."

"Yes; but here is an opportunity to exercise your chosen calling. Newness in a work does n't mean unfitness." The doctor was a man of quick discernment. He had been very favorably impressed by what he had seen and heard of Don that day. "If I had known you would be here I should have been glad to have you preach this morning also. It would have been a great comfort to Mr. Foster to know that his place was filled. Poor man, he is twenty miles off, very ill with a fever. I was with him all last night."

"And I was with your new patient at church-time this morning."

"Yes; your attendance there was doubtless one of 'the good works ordained for you to walk in.' I should like to hear a sermon on that text some day."

The church-bell rang "at early candle-lighting." When Don faced the congregation he was surprised to see that the church was quite full. He had decided to preach the same sermon which he had first preached in Chilhowee church, remembering how his father had been pleased with it. Like David, the shepherd lad, he was glad to have a tried weapon.

But how different his present listeners from the old friends in the old church; these were but friends of a day. There were Dr. Butler and others from the inn. Presently his eye rested on Agnes Hampton. "Beautiful as Tirzah!" What thoughts rushed into Don's mind! Here was a text for meditation, not for speech. With difficulty he forced himself to remember his present duty.

As he announced his text, he thought, "If I could but look into my father's and mother's eyes as at the first, how easy this task would be." Then the thought came to him, "The Lord is in His holy temple." Yes, he was in the presence of the One who had loved him first and best. It was His message he was proclaiming. "Come." And Don preached, he knew not how, but as seeing Him who is invisible.

Early the next morning Don started again on his travels. He had a full list of places of interest to

visit, but his two great points were his grandfather's and Leighton Hall. Now, after yesterday's strange events, with the vision of Agnes Hamilton still filling his mind, he suddenly resolved to go to Leighton Hall first of all. "I must see Eleanor Gordon, then I shall know what is dream, and what reality."

In his early boyhood, when he first knew Leigh and his story and Eleanor's, the thought had come to him that some day she might be his bride. His great love for Leigh fostered the idea, and made it pleasant to him; but they were a boy's thoughts, never put into words, even to himself. He had had only one short glimpse of Eleanor, in the bright days long ago when, she came to Chilhowee for her brother's wedding. Then Don was still a boy, dreaming but not speaking of what might be in the far-off time. But now, it was a man's heart that was throbbing, and he was awake. The placid dream had vanished, swept away like the merest cobweb by the events of the last few hours.

Long before he reached Leighton, Don knew for a certainty that Eleanor Gordon would never be his bride.

CHAPTER XIX.

DON AT LEIGHTON HALL.

DON did not wonder that Leigh Gordon had missed his home and longed for it, when he saw how beautiful it was. Leigh met him by the lake, looking happier than Don had ever seen him; no brother could have received a warmer welcome.

"My cup of joy is full," said Leigh; "to see you here, Don, fulfils the last of my longings."

"How we have waited for this day!"

"And now it has come in the happiest time."

DON knew what Leigh meant; for a little heir had lately come to Leighton, crowning all Leigh's other blessings.

"I have been eager to congratulate you, Leigh; what more can be given you?"

"Think of it, Don, I who was once so lonely!"

The sun glittered on the lake. DON remembered Leigh's tragic story. Here was the scene of it; here on the bank his father lay dead long years ago. And now again it was well with Leigh, he had others to love, the gap was filled.

They rode up the broad avenue, the sun shone on the hall windows; a group of young ladies stood on the porch, Don saw Eleanor among them. Jubal came forward to take the horses.

"Buncombe has n't forgotten you, Jubal," said Don.

"No, Marse Don, 'kase I been bearin' you an' him in mine, frequent. I 's pow'ful glad to see you heah, sah."

Eleanor's welcome was cordial as could be. The other ladies were cousins, Mr. Winsted Leigh's daughters, with whom Eleanor's girlhood had been spent. In the broad hall he found Lucy, placid and radiantly happy, beautiful as on her wedding-day, when he had last seen her. Beside her stood old mammy, not wrinkled and careworn, but seeming to have new youth and vigor in the joyous cares which had fallen to her lot; in her arms she held the fair, white-robed baby.

"O Don!" said Lucy, "you are the one we wanted most to see!"

"And here is what we wanted you to see most," said Leigh, taking his baby in his arms. "Our Winsted Leigh Gordon! the first heir among all the Chilhowee boys!" What joyful triumph shone in the happy father's eyes, as he gazed at the tiny

creature, the latest but most precious of his possessions.

"He was sent to the right place. You are the Chilhowee boy who has most for an heir."

"It is wonderful what hopes can centre in a life that 's just beginning! Here, Don, I 'll trust my baby to you, though he 's worth his weight in gold."

"You may feel it a compliment, Don, that mammy 'll let you hold him without a protest," laughed Lucy.

"I kin trust Marse Don; I l'arnt dat long ago."

"You 'll think little Win belongs to mammy, when you see how she dotes on him," said Leigh.

"And how we ask her leave when we want possession of our own child for a little while," added Lucy.

"Little Marse Win 's de biggest blessin' dat eber wuz, Marse Don," said mammy, as she reclaimed her treasure. "I likes nothin' better than to wuk for him."

"Yes," said Leigh; "and soon little Marse Win will be demanding Jubal's services as well, a nurse and a body-servant for this little mite of humanity."

"And here 's a whole houseful of people to love him," said Eleanor, "and be pleased even when he only winks his eye."

"Really, Don," said Leigh, "he engrosses my time and thoughts so, that if it was n't for Ned's devotion to business, I 'm afraid our law practice would suffer. I have an invaluable partner in my good brother-in-law."

"I hope he 'll not be too busy to come out to see me."

"He 's not here near as often as he ought to be," said Lucy, "considering he is an uncle for the first time."

"But he 's very much set up by the fact, Lucy," said Eleanor.

"He 'll certainly come, Don, as soon as he knows you 're here. I 've sent a messenger to town. He spent every evening with us while George and Alice were here."

In those first hours Don had much to hear and to tell, and then he was interested in studying Eleanor. She was a brunette, very attractive, with a pleasant, winning manner like Leigh's. Wealth and prosperity did not seem to have spoiled this brother and sister. She pleased Don more than her two lively young cousins, though they were also pretty and agreeable.

She reminded him of Leigh as he knew him in Chilhowee, when he was not so happy as now.

"Leigh has so many new ties that he no longer grieves over past losses and sorrows, but Eleanor still remembers," thought Don, as he saw her pensive look in the pauses of animated talk.

Involuntarily he contrasted her with Agnes, and wondered what his feelings towards her would have been if he had not spent those hours in Bellevue, the remembrance of which still thrilled him. "How glad I am that I saw Agnes before coming here! 'He leadeth me.'" But what hope had he that he should ever see her again? Even now she might not be free; and, if she was, there were at least Dr. Butler and the judge to be feared. It might be that this one precious memory was all he would have regarding her. Well, so let it be. He had made his choice.

The next morning Leigh made up a riding-party to show Don some of the beauties of the estate. All the ladies except Lucy joined it.

"I hope you will enjoy our views as much as Ken and Dr. Pratt did," said Leigh, on starting.

"But we 'll not be affronted if you don't think them superior to Chilhowee," said Eleanor. "The glimpse I had of your mountain and valley enchanted me. I treasure my deed to White Apple, and dream of some day setting up my tent there."

"A tent would be a good idea," said Don, "for the lodge has gone to ruin; but the place can never lose its beauty."

"If you would only go and reign there, Eleanor, as you once talked of doing," said Anne Leigh, "I should certainly visit you, if it was only to see Major Logan's Indian bride."

"And I too," added her sister Maude. "It 's hard to believe all your stories about her. Do you really think she 's happy, Mr. Craig?"

"She seems to be, Miss Leigh; and what 's more to the purpose, my mother says she is."

"Then it must be so," said Leigh. "We can trust Mrs. Craig's word."

"The major certainly seems to be very happy."

"His marriage surprised us all," said Anne, "my father especially; he said love was blind, truly. You couldn't have done such a thing, Mr. Craig."

"No." Don thought of Agnes; there could not be a greater contrast to Nacoochee.

"But we need not be surprised when we remember Pocahontas," said Eleanor. "Think how proud her descendants are!"

"But when it comes to one's own family it seems different," persisted Anne. "To be sure, Nacoochee is a beauty and an heiress."

"Perhaps Cousin Robert married her for her money," said her sister.

"Oh, no, never!" cried Leigh; "our family don't do that!" Then he remembered his Uncle Philip Gordon's thwarted project, and was suddenly silent.

In the afternoon they all went on the lake except Eleanor, who begged Lucy to take her place.

"Eleanor does n't care for boating as she did at Winsted Park," said her cousins.

"Oh, yes! but it's my turn to worship the baby, as it was Lucy's this morning. We can't let mammy have all the pleasure alone in little Marse Win."

The lake afforded most delightful boating. When they returned they found Ned Pratt waiting for them at the landing.

That evening Don had a double study, Ned as well as Eleanor. He had been surprised to learn from Mrs. Pratt that Ned wished to give up his flourishing law practice, and come home to Chilhowee, where there was comparatively little to do; and now again he was puzzled on finding that he needed special urging to bring him to Leighton. "Why should that be?" The thought set Don watching.

Before long he had decided that Ned was specially interested in Eleanor, and pleased to be in

her society, but that he took pains to hide his preference. "He does it well, if he wants her not to know. I wish she did care for him, but she seems quite indifferent. And here are Leigh and Lucy too serene and happy to notice this little rift. I wonder at their blindness."

But in spite of Don's thoughts the evening was delightfully spent. Ned sang for them; he had a fine voice. The gay young cousins filled all gaps with lively talk.

The next morning Ned returned to town immediately after breakfast. "I am sorry to leave you, Don; but since Leigh gives me a chance to make my fortune by doing his work, I must not neglect it."

"I shall expect you to devote all your leisure moments to me, Ned," replied Don.

"He has promised," said Lucy. "He's very good about coming out when we have a special attraction for him."

The morning was spent in another long ride. After his return Don waited for dinner in the broad upper hall, which was hung with pictures. Eleanor, who saw him studying an old portrait, stopped to explain. "These pictures are puzzles to a stranger, but each one has a story."

She was at first all animation; but presently her face clouded as they paused before a group of portraits, each of which bore some resemblance to herself.

"These are our family pictures; I want you to see them. Leigh has told you how" — She turned away.

Don studied the portraits. Leigh's story of his father's death was plain in his mind. "Mammy covered the pictures with a sheet," Leigh had said. Now that they were uncovered, evidently Eleanor could not bear to look at them.

There was the handsome young father, the beautiful mother, Leigh, a bright manly boy, and Eleanor, a most charming little girl.

"Uncle Winsted says they are very like." She spoke with her face still averted. "I remember how happy I was when they first hung here. But soon after, all that great trouble came — and I know I have never looked nor felt like that child since."

"I can understand. I know how Leigh grieved. But he is happy now."

"Yes; he began to be comforted at Chilhowee Parsonage. I remember his letter about his first visit there. It made me feel that I could never be contented till I had seen you all. How long I

waited for my one little glimpse, but even that was worth the journey."

"Every one wore his happiest face then."

"Yes; but Leigh said it was always so there. He called it the Happy Valley. Here things grow sadder to me; I cannot bear to look at the pictures nor the lake. I do not know how Leigh could have borne it to come back, if he had not had a hope from the first that some day Lucy would be here to make things bright; and now, with her and little Win, who could be happier?"

"It delights me to see it."

"Yes, I am glad. But he does n't need me. I miss that. Then I think of White Apple; how I should like to live there, and be kind to Nacoochee; and there are others. Your sweet cousin Alice, when she was here, told me how lonely her mother was, now she had left her; and I picture to myself how pleasant it would be to be near enough to comfort her."

"That would certainly please Aunt Emma; she does need comfort, though she has been very brave about Alice — I can't tell you how much they are to each other."

It pleased Don to find Eleanor talking to him as to a brother. "She has learned it from Leigh. But

it 's a pity I can't talk to her as to a very own sister. If I could, I 'd tell her to smile on poor lonely Ned, and be happy by making him happy."

All too soon came the last evening of Don's visit. Ned, faithful to his promise, was again there.

"Come out for a little row on the lake, Ned," said Don; "I like it best at sunset."

After some conversation about Don's next day's journey, Ned said, "You need n't be surprised if I'm soon back in Chilhowee, Don. Now that I'm the only one of the family left without other ties, I really think it 's my duty to devote myself to mother."

"Forsake this charming circle, and a growing practice! Why, Ned, I heard your mother arguing against it herself not long ago."

"Yes, I know her views. She is the most unselfish of mothers. And of course with Margaret and Ken just come home, she thinks she does n't need me; but I 'd be a great deal to her if I was there. Why, Don, I think my heart would break if I did n't have mother to live for, for she 's the only one left. There was a time when she could n't do without me. Don't you remember, all through the war she could n't spare me even to go to college? Looking back now, those seem my happiest days — when I was important — to some one."

“Why don’t you follow George’s example, and your sisters’, and be happier than ever by making yourself of the first importance to some one?”

Ned paused before answering; in the gathering twilight Don could not see his face. “There is only one that I ever thought of; and there have been great obstacles in the way, — are still, I imagine.”

“Would you mind being a little more explicit? What are the obstacles?”

Now Ned looked full at Don. “Tell me first, please, do you intend to marry Eleanor?”

“No, I do not.”

Ned was evidently surprised at Don’s positive answer. “I have really thought you did. Nothing could please Leigh better.”

“But pleasing Leigh is not the first consideration in such a matter.”

“No; but I imagined Eleanor was your choice, for she is — oh, perfection! Oh! it has been a long delusion, and has kept me from” —

“Don’t let it hinder you any longer from happiness; for truly Eleanor can never be anything more to me than she already is, the sister of my dearest friend.”

Don’s words were convincing, though he gave no reason. “I cannot say more,” thought he. “I do

believe Ned thinks Eleanor has refused me; another delusion, but it won't stand in his way as the first did. Good, generous fellow, to love me through it all!"

For a time Ned's thoughts were too busy for words; then he said, "There are other hindrances, Don. Think of my small income beside Eleanor's fortune."

"And yet you saw nothing in my way, though a clergyman's salary will be even less."

"I know what you are to Leigh; that covers everything. I am his brother-in-law and his college mate, to whom he has been generous almost beyond belief; but you are even nearer to him, like a best loved brother; I saw that in the years we were together."

"Leigh had an aching heart when we first met; that's what made me so much to him, I think. But take my advice, Ned, and marry Eleanor, then you will be doubly his brother-in-law; what closer ties could you have?"

"It's easily said, Don; but Eleanor has never seemed to care for me. That is really the most hopeless feature in the case."

"How could she possibly show her feelings when you take such pains to conceal yours? I like her

the better for her reserve, and so do you, I know. But you 're both longing for Chilhowee — that 's a curious coincidence. And there 's an opening to build up a law practice, for Major Logan 's too devoted to geology and Indian legends to take hold. Turn White Apple into a paradise, Ned, and let Eleanor have the home she needs, where she can be the bright happy creature her childhood promised."

"O Don, what a world this would be if all were as hopeful as you are!"

That evening was the brightest of all. Ned sang with Eleanor with evident pleasure. "He has taken heart," thought Don.

Leigh lamented the shortness of Don's visit. "We want you again soon. We want you often. This has brought back the old times so vividly that I don't know how to do without you, Don. Oh! this world is too wide when friends must be so far apart."

"We shall bear each other so in mind, Leigh, that our thoughts and hearts will meet, though we cannot travel the long road."

The next morning Don left Leighton. Ned rode out of his way to bear him company for a while. "I shall make a strong pull for paradise," he said at parting; "and if I am so fortunate as to gain it, I shall thank you, Don."

And now again Don had leisure for his own happy thoughts, which made his long ride seem a short, blissful journey.

What a welcome Don received when he reached his grandfather's house!

"Do you really know me, grandma?"

"Know you, Don! How could I forget! You are the same dear child I have waited for all these years."

"Don is his father as he first left us," said Grandfather Craig.

"O grandpa, I 'm glad you think so!"

How Don talked! and yet how glad he was to listen. To the grandparents it was like having their own son with them again, young and joyous. They gazed at the bright face, wishing that parting might never again come. Don pleased them by remembering what he had seen when he was there long before, and by his eagerness to see all again.

His grandfather lent him another horse while Buncombe rested. "I 'm glad you have a chance to try Chestnut, for I intended him for John. I was trying to find a way to send him to Chilhowee, when your father wrote to tell me that he had gone from home."

"It would have delighted John to have such a

horse. He 's a beauty, and goes splendidly. John 's missed a great deal."

"Yes! Well, perhaps he may yet deserve him. But I 'm glad he did n't have him on those break-neck rides you have told us about, for I 've made a great pet of Chestnut."

"John writes as if he was delighted with his adventures; he boasts of getting through without a scratch, and now that he 's making money he 's very proud. Still, father thinks he 'll some day come back, and love his home as well as any of us do."

"I hope so. He may be all the happier in it for having seen something of the world."

"It 's good to travel, I 've found that out. I really did n't think I could settle down till I had taken this journey that I had been counting on so long. But now that I have seen you and Leigh, I can't tell you how satisfied I feel. I am beginning to be eager for work. I am to help father till something else offers."

It was the conviction of the old folks that this young clerical grandson would soon find an opening. This opinion was strengthened by hearing him preach. They longed to have him settled near them. What pleasure to be able to listen to his voice in

the house of God! When it came to parting, they thought, with Leigh, that the world was too wide.

"When will you come again, Don?" asked grandma. "On your wedding journey, as Ken did? Margaret pleased us well. I hope you will make as good a choice."

"He will," said grandpa. "We can trust him for that. And you know how we'll welcome and love your bride, Don."

"I hope you'll love me even if I come alone. I don't know that I shall ever have a wedding journey." Don was glad it was time to go, since this was a subject on which he could not talk.

CHAPTER XX.

COLONEL FLETCHER'S CAMP.

THERE was a call waiting for Don when he reached home. A little church in Powell's Valley, Virginia, invited him to be their minister.

"I know the place," said Parson Craig. "It is almost the nearest point to us across the State line, about three days' ride from here."

"I 'm glad it 's so near." A three days' journey seemed short to Don after his recent travels.

"It is among simple farmer folk, a good many poor, none too rich; I think it may be a satisfactory field for you."

"It 's where work is waiting," said his mother. "That makes it the best place."

"It is better than I hoped for, to hear of work so soon. I 'm ready; my holiday has been long enough."

Don had only a few bright days for home. He told the story of his travels. He was a good storyteller, even his father could detect no gap in the

narrative; but he omitted all mention of the Hamiltons and the judge's accident, though he would have been glad to hear his father's and Kenneth's opinions on his last attempt at surgery.

"You have had just what I wanted for you," said his father; "a few weeks of unalloyed pleasure before buckling on your armor for your life-work, in which, doubtless, you will encounter much toil and anxiety; but it is the most blessed of all work."

"Yes, I am glad I have chosen it."

His mother felt that now she must truly learn to live without Don, as she helped him pack his few home treasures. This was different than any other going away.

"Now there are three boys to get letters from," said Alec, when post-day came round.

Letters from the absent sons were the great interest now. With Hugh doing mission-work among the Indians, and Don in his new field, and John far down the Mississippi, seeking his fortune, post-day was almost sure to bring some important mis-
sive.

For some time John had seemed satisfied with his position in Natchez, but now he wrote of disaster.

"Our firm has become bankrupt, lost everything.

I might have known things were going wrong, for they kept back part of my money every week; lately did n't pay me anything. I thought it was safe with them, and I 'd get it when I needed it. Now I have n't much more than when I landed here, after all the hard work I 've done. Well, it 's enough to take me to New Orleans, and I 've still got Nick.

"I 've been so busy lately that I had hardly any time to ride him, and one of the partners tried to coax him from me, — said he would pay me a good price; but I reckon he would have kept most of the money back, as he did my salary, so I 'm glad I did n't agree. I 'm just waiting now for a boat to take me down the river. I 'll write again when I stop somewhere."

"What trouble our poor John is in," said his mother, who felt even more distressed because his father was absent when this letter came.

"Oh! I wish John would come home," said Bessie. "Why don't you say he must, mother?"

"I hope he will want to some day. That will be a great deal better."

"John 's never going to turn back till he 's seen New Orleans, and has a pocket full of money," said Alec. "That 's what he told me before he

went away. But how 's he going to get any money when people cheat him so?"

There were some long, anxious weeks of waiting before the next letter came. At last one arrived with the New Orleans post-mark.

"He 's got there!" cried Alec, feeling that now all John's troubles were over.

"I 've just reached here," wrote John, "and I have bad news to tell. I started down on a flat-boat; but before long we got caught on a sawyer, and could n't get loose any way. It was in the night, and we went all to pieces. I swam ashore with some of the men. I lost everything but my money. Poor Nick was drowned; that 's the worst thing. I don't know how to do without him. Oh! I tried so hard to save him, but I could n't; he got tangled in the wreck some way, and it was pitch dark.

"I walked here with two of the boat-hands; we were seventeen days on the road, for we lost our way, and got stuck in a good many marshes. I was wet up to the knees most of the time, and my shoes wore out, and I blistered my feet.

"But now I 'm here! that 's the only good thing about it. This is the very place where General Jackson gained the great victory; and I 'll get to see all

the places and things that Uncle Will and Uncle Alec and Mr. Webster told us about. I 'm writing at the post-office. I came here first thing, and got your letter. Now I'm going to find work. I 'll be rich yet; nobody need think I'm going to give up."

This letter, of course, caused even more consternation and anxiety in the little home circle than the previous one.

"Oh, my poor dear boy! he seems utterly bereft," said his mother. "If we only had him once more safe under our own roof, how thankful I should be. But he does n't write as if his thoughts were turned towards home, even after all these losses and hardships."

"No," said his father, "the letter shows what a determined character John's is. Giving up is the hardest thing in the world for him. And if he even wanted to come home it would be almost impossible, with a slim purse and no horse. Poor John! I must write at once. If he will agree to come home, I will send him the necessary means."

Mrs. Craig felt relieved and hopeful when the letter was posted, and she began to think how she would welcome her dear wandering boy.

The next mail brought a short letter from John. His father was again absent.

"New Orleans is a dreadful place just now," wrote John, "because there 's so much sickness. I can't find any work here, and I 'm going away to-day with some surveyors to help them. I don't know yet where we 'll travel; but we 'll be far away from any post-office, I believe."

"Oh, my poor lost boy!" said Mrs. Craig. Her grief was greater because she knew John must have left New Orleans before it was possible for him to receive his father's letter urging him to come home; now how could they trace him?

"Every time John writes it makes us sorrier," said Bess.

"It 'll be worse if he stops writing," said Alec. "I just reckon he 's gone to the Indian country; and maybe he 'll live there always, and can't ever get any more letters from us."

John Craig's position in New Orleans was even more desperate than his letter indicated. He had been obliged to spend most of his small savings in buying clothes, and had not enough money left to pay for a passage anywhere, though he was warned to leave the city if he valued his life. Under such circumstances he took very little pleasure in seeing the sights for which he had longed.

Then he met a party of surveyors fleeing from the

city, and agreed to work for them. He regretted that he had not studied surveying with his father when he had the opportunity; for now he could have secured a fine position with high wages, instead of working hard and receiving very little pay.

His employer lent him a horse. There was a great deal of rough riding to do, and the horse was not as good as poor Nick.

He resolved to buy a gun with the first money he received.

They had an Indian guide, for there was a vast wilderness to be crossed before reaching the first tract of land to be surveyed. John felt safe with such a large party of responsible men. "I am seeing a great deal of the world," thought he.

He was always tired enough to rest when camping-time came; but when the men found that he knew how to mix and bake hoe-cake, that task always fell to him, and often the broiling or roasting of the meat.

"This is more than I bargained for," tired John would think, as he toiled over his task, while his companions lolled about, smoking, or playing cards. The Indian fed the horses, and gathered wood for the fire.

When the surveying began, John found that he had work that tried his patience greatly. It kept

him running back and forth. It seemed to him that he ran many miles in the course of the day. Colonel Fletcher's voice sounded very sharp as he shouted out his directions; he had no patience with John's mistakes, though he knew he was only a learner.

"Nobody ever talked this way to me at home," thought John. "I'll be glad when this engagement is over."

He felt that his supper and his night's rest were well earned; but, tired as he was, he found that he was still expected to be cook for the whole party. John was angry, but did not dare to express his feelings. "If I was the head of this company, I hope I'd be kinder to some people than the colonel is," he thought, as he bent over his smoking fire. "Why, I'm treated almost like a slave." He remembered how delighted he was when he first left home, at the thought that he was his own master. "Well, things won't be this way always. I must be on the lookout for something better."

One night, after a very hard day's work, John had just got himself comfortably fixed for sleep, when he was roused by shouts of dismay from his fellow-campers, every one of whom scrambled hastily to his feet.

"What is it?" cried John, springing up.

"Indians! horse-thieves! Every one must look after his own nag," said one man.

"Yes, and we 'd better be quiet about it, too," said another.

John seized his saddle, and ran to untie Slater's stake-rope. It was a moment of terror as he stooped over his task, and wondered how many Indians were hidden behind the trees, taking aim at him.

"I could hide if it was n't for this old horse," thought he. "Slater is n't worth risking my life for, but I could n't do without him."

John sat on his horse, watching, listening. Everything had become quiet after the first alarm, but the sounds he had heard made him sure Indians were near. He had his gun ready. The men were all on the alert. "It would be a great mishap to Colonel Fletcher to lose his horses and surveying outfit," thought he. "But I reckon I 'll not shoot unless it 's to save some one's life. There 's the colonel acting as if he is n't a bit afraid. That horse he rides is a splendid creature; he 'd shoot a lot of Indians to save him. What 's the guide riding off for? Has the colonel sent him?"

John had not heard the Indians come; but now, as they galloped away, he both saw and heard. Not a shot had been fired, not an arrow let fly.

The men dismounted, and again gathered round the fire. "We 're lucky to be in Colonel Fletcher's camp," said they.

It was a puzzle to John. "The colonel just sent that guide to the Indians, and they were off like a flash. I wish I knew the secret of his power over them. He 's a great tyrant, and I don't like him; but I 'm glad if he can keep us safe."

But before long John held different views regarding the colonel. He began to admire him, and to wish to be like him. "Then I 'd know how to be a successful man," thought John. "The colonel has a big income, and has his own way in everything; makes everybody mind him, white men and Indians. How he orders me around! That 's the part that does n't suit me. But he 's certainly a very smart man, and I can learn a lot from him."

Everybody listened when Colonel Fletcher talked. One evening he was in a story-telling humor, and the cards were laid aside while he told some of his war experiences.

John never tired of hearing war stories. But when the colonel began to tell of his adventures among the Indians, he was even more interested. He leaned on his elbow, and looked intently at the speaker, whose face was lighted up by the blazing camp-fire.

"I 've had a great many dealings with Indians," said the colonel; "and it 's a wonder, too, for my first venture into the land of the red men came near being my last.

"I was a young man then, and did not know what fear was. I had joined a hunting-party, and we were having rare sport, but I lost the trail. That did n't trouble me, for I liked adventure; but soon after missing my companions I found myself surrounded by a band of savage Indians, who made me prisoner, and carried me far into the interior.

"That was a dreadful journey; but worse came at the end, when I met all the warriors of their tribe, every one hating the very sight of a white man. I could n't speak their language. I have learned many Indian dialects since; but that was the time I needed a ready tongue, and stood dumb before my enemies. Oh, I passed through a terrible ordeal!"

John noticed the shudder which accompanied the words.

The colonel continued, "They condemned me to death without a dissenting voice. I was bound fast to a tree, a fire was lighted; there seemed no escape from the most dreadful of deaths, and oh, how I wished to live! The warriors sat in a half-circle, all looking at me, gloating over me. But even in

that desperate moment I could not give up hope. I scanned every face to see if there was any help. The youngest of the braves fixed his eyes on me; I thought I saw a pitying glance, and looking full at him I made a Masonic sign; young as I was, I was already a Mason.

“Instantly the young chief sprang to his feet, demanding my freedom as a brother Mason. He cut the thongs that bound me. No one could gainsay him. I was free, and safe under his protection. It was from death to life to me!”

“That was a wonderful escape! There was one time when it did you good to keep your wits about you,” commented one of his listeners.

“Was the chief always your friend after that?” asked John.

“Yes, faithful to me till he died; he fell in battle in the War of 1812. I shall never forget his kindness after he claimed me as a brother. He treated me as such truly, took me to his own wigwam, fed me with the choicest venison, reclaimed my horse for me, and travelled with me till we found my lost companions. I still have a souvenir which he gave me; see,” handing his tomahawk to John.

“Oh, your peace-pipe! I’ve often wondered how

you got it. It is like Chief Owassa's, which my father and brother have seen." John looked at it attentively. It was a hatchet, the blade of the finest steel; the hard-wood handle, hollow and inlaid with silver, formed a pipe-stem which was connected with a bowl in the hammer-end of the hatchet or tomahawk.

"I value it very highly," said the colonel, pleased at John's interest. "I 've never seen one like it, though some old chiefs may have them. They are, of course, not the genuine Indian peace-pipes, but were made by French gunsmiths."

"Yes," said John, "in the French and Indian war."

"You paid dear for your hatchet, Colonel," said one of the men.

"How? by that one day's fright? You might n't think so if you knew how many wigwams it has given me entrance to. I 'm welcomed when the chiefs see it. I tell its story as they smoke it, and they are proud of the young warrior who saved my life. Oh! I have many friends among the Indians."

"Yes, and among white men too, I reckon," said another man. "It 's a fine thing to have power."

The colonel smiled. It pleased him to rule, even if his kingdom was only a little surveyors' camp in the woods.

John remained with the camp till all Colonel Fletcher's work in that part of the country was finished. Now he was going east in search of new engagements, and had no more need of John. He offered to sell him the horse he had been riding; but John did not like Slater. He seemed a very poor horse after Nick, certainly not worth paying for with a good part of his hard-earned money.

The colonel, of his own accord, wrote him a letter of recommendation. John was pleased to find that he was well satisfied with the work he had done.

"We 're a long way from where we first met," said Colonel Fletcher; "but now would be a good time for you to be in New Orleans, if you care to go down the Mississippi again. You might reach the river in a week or so, even if you walk."

"I 'd sooner walk than be bothered with a horse on the boat," said John. "I had enough trouble and expense with poor Nick, and lost him after all."

"Well, I hope you 'll have no bad mishaps this time. Be sure to choose a good boat. This letter will help you to a first-rate berth with some captain. And when you 're in the Indian country, just tell the chiefs Colonel Fletcher 's your friend; they all know my name."

It was early in the afternoon when John parted from his companions. The colonel and several of his assistants rode east, the Indian with them. He, too, was seeking another engagement as guide. The two men who were left behind talked as if uncertain of their plans. "We 're not going your way," said one of them to John.

The man who spoke was the one of the company John had liked least. "I shall be glad to miss Austin," was his thought, as he began his solitary journey, going straight west. "He 's a gambler, I 'm sure. The others only played to while away the time, I reckon. But Austin looked greedy whenever he gained a point. Ah! he was the one that wanted to teach me. He was sure he 'd get hold of my money that way."

John had never before been so completely alone. The hours seemed long. He watched the sun, thinking he would be glad when camping-time came; but instead it was even more dreary. There was no horse to feed or talk to, no supper to prepare for any one, not even for himself, for he had shot no game. He could hardly persuade himself to light a fire when there was nothing to cook. "But it 'll be company, and help to keep me safe."

After the wood began to blaze he sat down to

eat some jerked venison and corn bread which he had in his bag. He did not like the thought of the journey before him, every day and night as lonely as this.

"If I 'd only made enough money, I 'd go home now. Mother 's wondering what 's become of me, and it does n't seem as if I 'd ever get another letter from anybody. Oh! I wish I was as rich as I ought to be after all the hard work I 've done."

The colonel had settled with him that day. He took out his purse, and spread the precious coins on a flat stone to count them. It was all he had earned in the months he had been with the surveyors, except what went to buy his gun.

John shook his head as he counted. "I 'd be ashamed to go back without more money than this; I 'll have to make it some way." He had failed to receive his father's last letter, or possibly he might have come to a different conclusion.

He began to put his money into his purse again, one piece at a time. He liked to look at it and to feel it. Oh, if he only had a great pile of such stuff!

His fire was of hickory logs, which sparkled and crackled so that John did not know some one was creeping up behind him with steps as stealthy as an Indian's. Suddenly a hideous face looked over

his shoulder, a face smeared with great patches of red clay, looking like a bloody mask; a hand similarly bedaubed snatched his purse.

John sprang to his feet, and looked for his gun, which he had placed on the ground close beside him; but the wary thief already had possession of it. It was a terrible moment to John. He felt that everything was lost. But no, it should not be! He grappled with the thief, who had turned to run with his spoils. John tried to wrench the gun from him, but his enemy was a powerful man; the boy fought at great odds. In the struggle the weapon struck the ground and discharged itself, burying the bullet in the thief's wrist.

"Oh, you young rascal! my right hand, too."

These were the first words the disguised man had spoken; they betrayed him.

"Austin, is it you? Give me back my money!"

But the man freed himself from the boy's grasp, and ran, still clutching the purse.

John pursued, hallooing and entreating. Austin paid no heed, but struck immediately into the woods, where there was no path. He dodged about among the trees as if he knew the way. John was a good runner, but here he was at a great disadvantage; he could not overtake Austin.



A HAND SNATCHED HIS PURSE.

He had not gone far when he heard horses pawing the ground, and the next moment he saw a mounted man holding a second horse by the bridle. Then Austin, running at full speed, reached them, and springing into his saddle, rode away with his companion.

“That ’s Blake! Oh, I did n’t think he was such a bad man! They must have made this plan to rob me just as I walked away from them this afternoon. Austin told me they were n’t coming my way to put me off my guard.”

John was almost dazed by his great and sudden disaster. He stood stock-still, listening to the rapid trotting of the horses. “Oh, my money!” groaned he. “I shall never see it again!”

He found his way back to his camp by the smoke from his fire. “That ’s how Austin knew exactly where I was. And I lighted it, thinking it would keep me safe!”

He found his gun lying where it had fallen. The few coins which he had not put into his purse were still on the flat stone. “It ’s well I have my gun. There ’s not near enough money left to buy another. That bullet in Austin’s wrist was what saved it for me. I ’m glad it did n’t strike me. Oh, he wanted to strip me of everything! I hope

I 'm done with gamblers. How dreadful Austin looked with that red stuff on his face and hands, trying to keep me from knowing him."

John lay awake till long into the night, too unhappy and disappointed to sleep. "I was just beginning to think how pleasant it would be to go home and see them all, but now I 'm too poor. I 'll have to keep on with this dreadful journey. Where 's the use of earning money, to be cheated out of it the way I was at Natchez; and now this is worse."

The morning did not bring any brighter prospects. "I hope nobody else is in as much trouble as I am to-day," thought John, as he started on his march. "But I 'd sooner be myself than Austin, with a bullet in his wrist, and a stolen purse in his pocket. Yes, he 's worse off, and so 's Blake. I reckon they 're gambling with my money now."

He was on a road which he had never travelled before, passing through the Indian country among a tribe whose language he did not know. "I wish I could meet some Cherokees, I don't like Indians I can't talk to," he thought, as he passed their wigwams.

He had not walked far when it began to rain; but he trudged on, resolved not to let anything hinder

him in this long tramp which was to take him to where he could earn money. The rain increased, it pelted down on him pitilessly; and the wind blew till he could scarcely keep his feet. An Indian wigwam was a comfortless place in a storm, he knew that from experience; but he must have shelter.

What was that light shining before him out of an open door? Could it possibly be a blacksmith's forge here in the heart of the Indian country? Oh, if it was only Jacob Webster's! John's heart leaped up at the thought. But it could not be, for Mr. Webster was far away in the Cherokee Nation.

But John ran with the wind till he reached the door; and there at the forge, by the bright light, stood Mr. Webster, showing an Indian boy how to make a horseshoe.

It was like a glimpse of Chilhowee to John. How happy he felt, how light-hearted! With one bound he was at the blacksmith's side, holding out his hand, and exclaiming, "O Mr. Webster! don't you know John Craig?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BLACKSMITH TO THE INDIANS.

It would be hard to say which was most delighted at meeting, John or the blacksmith. What news the young traveller had to tell and hear as he sat, snug and comfortable, beside the blazing forge, his old friend listening, pleased as any boy.

"It 's a feast to the eyes to see you, my lad," he said, in one of the pauses of John's story. "What you have gone through! Well, it 's made a man of you. You 've grown and improved wonderfully since I last saw you."

"Do you think so? I 'm glad; Bess said I 'd be a giant when I got home."

"You 're beginning to want to see the home folks right bad, I reckon."

"Yes. But since you 've seen Hugh, and heard they 're all well, I think I can content myself away a while longer till I get back some of that money I started out for. How would I feel walking back to Chilhowee without a cent?"

"Oh! I would n't let that stop me. Why, they 'd be glad to see you, no matter how you came. Hugh says your father and mother are hankering after you day and night; they don't know how to live without you."

"I 'd like to go home, truly I would." John had thought more of his parents' love, and understood it better, in those lonely days in the wilderness, than when he was with them in happy Chilhowee Parsonage.

"I was hoping you had started that way. It 's been three months since I saw Hugh. He said your mother was always watching for letters."

"I 'm afraid she has n't had any all this time. I wrote, but Colonel Fletcher said letters had a poor chance to go straight from where we were. Most likely they 'd stay forever in somebody's pocket. I have n't had any, not for ever so long."

"Then maybe you did n't get the one your grandfather wrote."

"No! did grandpa write to me? Oh, I wish I 'd got it!"

"Yes. It 's a pity you missed it. Hugh says Squire Craig wants you to come to see him. That 's what he wrote about."

It sounded like joyful news to John. He sprang

to his feet. "Grandpa wants me! O Mr. Webster, I'll go! That's the best thing I can do. Tell me all Hugh said about it, please."

"He had just come from there when I saw him. He rode over to my place to say good-by, because he heard that I was leaving it for this new post. He said your grandpa and grandma would n't rest easy till all you boys had been to see them. The older ones had made their visits, and now it was your turn. And he'd written to beg you to come soon, and stay as long as ever you could; for when the boys went away it made the house so lonesome that it almost broke their hearts."

"Yes! Hugh and Don have their preaching, you know; and Ken's a doctor, so you know he has n't much time to spare. And that's what grandpa wrote? Why, it's splendid! I can make just as long a visit as they want, and after that go straight home to Chilhowee."

"You might take Chilhowee on your way, and get a peep at everybody, and then go on to your grandfather's; how would that do?"

"Oh! it would take so much longer; would n't I have to walk a great deal out of my way? And a peep would n't be enough if I once got home. I think I ought to hurry to grandpa's, since he's been

waiting so long, and never got any answer to his letter."

"Yes, that 's a very good plan; the best, I think. I 'd hate to have you go down the Mississippi again, and come back poorer than ever. You know I tried it twice, and that 's the way it turned out."

"Oh! I did n't want to go this time. But I could n't bear to go home without anything when I 'd told everybody that I was n't coming back till I 'd found my fortune. But going to grandpa's is different. Father 'll understand. I 'll write to him."

"Yes, do. I 'll try my best to get the letter sent."

Now that John's mind was at ease, he began to take an interest in the blacksmith's affairs.

"You did n't tell me how you happened to come away from the place father found for you, Mr. Webster. He thought you 'd like it there very well."

"So I did. Working in the mission pleased me mightily. But the Indian boys were quick to learn the blacksmith trade, and of course I was glad to teach them. Some of them now can do all the smith work the mission needs. Three months ago I gave up my forge to them altogether."

"What a pity, when you liked it there so much."

"Oh! but this is just as good a place; we are all very happy here. You see, the Indians for some time past have been holding out considerable encouragement to mechanics to settle all through their country. After looking about a good deal, I made up my mind to come here, where there are no other white people living. They gave me and my family a hearty welcome. They built this shop for me, with what help Harvey and I could give. And it 's as good a shop as I ever had."

"It 's better than the old Chilhowee one," said John, who had been looking at it.

"Yes, for everything 's new. Oh! I 'm well fixed. I have a good house, too. It was raining so hard when you got here that I reckon you did n't see it."

"All I saw was the light from the forge, and you standing in it. That seemed so wonderful that I did n't have eyes for anything else."

"I can believe it. I can't tell you how glad I am that you found me; for you 've been in my thoughts very often, and I was afraid you were in trouble. Now you 'll see my house; for there 's the dinner-horn, and my folks are wanting to see you. Harvey 's told them you 're here."

The blacksmith's wife and sister gave John a most cordial and delighted welcome. They had known

him nearly all his life, and were fond of him, as they were of all Parson Craig's sons.

"You are the first white visitor we 've had," they said; "and we don't know anybody we 'd be gladder to see."

"You can't be gladder than I am," said John. "You 're the first friends I 've met since I left Chilhowee, and you don't know how pleased it makes me."

"I wish your mother was here to-day, John," said Mrs. Webster, as they sat at dinner, "to see how safe and well you are after all your travels and adventures. We want to hear about them. Harvey says they 're wonderful."

"Yes," agreed Harvey; "I could n't half listen, though, for having to finish that horseshoe father dropped in such a hurry the minute he saw John."

"I forgot all about the shoe, that 's a fact. Generally I can work while I talk, but this time it was different."

"John could n't well find any one who could understand his stories better than you can, Jacob," said his sister; "for you 've been over the same ground twice."

"Yes, Martha, and with just as poor success. Don't you remember, John, I told you all about it before you started."

"Yes; but I 'm not sorry I went, except that I lost poor Nick."

"I dare say that was worse than losing your money," said Martha.

"Yes, I was fond of Nick. He was such good company."

"He was a very fine animal," said Mr. Webster. "I 've often shod him. I considered him the parson's best horse; Luby 's pretty old, you know."

"Father was very generous to give me Nick."

"I wish you had as good a horse for the long journey that 's before you."

"I don't believe I want one, for, if he was good, like Nick, I don't know how I could keep him safe, he 'd be almost sure to be stolen; and if he was a poor horse, that nobody coveted, I would n't care for him either, he 'd just be a bother. I 've made up my mind to walk to grandfather's."

"It 's a tremendous long journey from here, John. The miles count up into the hundreds."

"I 've run miles and miles, day after day, working for those surveyors."

"You did n't know what you were training for. Oh! I think you can make that journey, for I 've done just such travelling myself."

"If you don't have a horse you 'll not have near

as much trouble at the fords," said Harvey, "for you 're a first-rate swimmer; all Chilhowee knows that."

John smiled, glad to be once more among appreciative friends.

"Yes," said the blacksmith; "and you 'll have very little expense on your journey if you don't have to buy horse-feed."

"A little corn meal for hoe-cake, that 's all I expect to buy," said John, remembering the slimness of his purse.

"Unless your powder and shot give out," said Harvey, "for you 'll depend mostly on game."

"I can fish. I can make a bow and arrows. I thought of that yesterday when Austin had my gun. Oh! I 'll not starve, even if I get out of bullets. And if it was only a river journey to grandfather's, I could make a canoe that would carry me there; I made one before I left home."

"It 's well to be plucky," said Martha, "and to know how to make the best of things."

"John 's like his brothers there," said Mr. Webster. "How I miss those boys! I reckon I feel like your grandfather, John; now I 've seen you I want to see all the rest of the Craigs. It used to do me good just to hear Don laugh."

"Don 's got a church now. He 's so far away that he never gets home. That was the news in the last letter I got. Everybody misses him."

"Of course they do; Hugh told me. Well, we miss the Chilhowee folks, your father most of all. How I liked to sit under his preaching!"

"But we 've got a good home here, John," said Martha; "don't you like the looks of it?"

"Yes; I did n't know Indians could build such a good house unless they were smart, like Ahila or Pukpuggee."

"Oh! now you 've picked out the best Indians that ever breathed," said Harvey; "but these are very good; they can't talk English, though, and sometimes make queer mistakes."

"Yes, John," said Mr. Webster; "when we first came here we lived in a tent. The Indians wanted to help us build the house, so we invited them to come on a certain day. They mistook the day, and came on Sunday instead."

"What did you do then?"

"I explained to them the best I could. I did not know their language very well. I told them it was a holy day. They should do no work on it, but must talk about the Great Spirit, and sing praises to Him, and try to keep it holy to please Him. I said

they could not build my house then, but they might come the next day to help me. They had brought their axes with them; but they all went quietly home, and came again on Monday. They helped me faithfully all through the week on this house."

"I reckon they were glad to do it," said John. "Indians have idle times except in the hunting season."

"Oh! they seemed very glad to be here. But the next Sunday a curious thing happened. They all came back again, and told me I must preach to them. I was not expecting such a thing. But they were not willing to go away without being preached to."

"What did you do, Mr. Webster? Did you really preach a sermon?"

"I did what I could. I was willing to instruct them as well as I knew how."

"They were so earnest," said Mrs. Webster, "sheep without a shepherd; we pitied them."

"I read the Bible to them awhile, and then talked to them and prayed with them. Then I told them they might go home, and if they would come back the next Sunday I would read more to them."

"And they come," said Martha, "every Sunday

without fail. It is the most blessed hour in the week."

"They think father's preaching is very good," said Harvey.

"I reckon it is, too." John had a very high appreciation of Mr. Webster. "Why, father 'll be glad to hear about this. It 's a real mission, is n't it?"

"No, we 're just trying to help them all we can. If I am able to do them any good, it 's greatly because of what I have learned from your father."

"It 's a good thing you can do it. When Indians want preaching they will have it, they won't let you off." John remembered his experience the first Sunday he spent among the Chickasaws long before.

"I wish you could stay over Sunday, John," said his host; "I would like you to hear them sing. Martha is teaching them."

"I 'd like to stay; but I 'm in such a hurry to get to grandpa's that I must start just after breakfast to-morrow."

That night, as John lay in his comfortable bed, he wondered that he felt so happy, when he remembered the misery of the previous night beside his lonely camp-fire.

"I 'm just as poor as I was then, and I 've got a

longer journey to take than if I went to the Mississippi. But grandfather wants me! he 's sent for me, that 's the grand thing!"

To be assured of the affection, and to be wanted by one whom he had been taught to esteem and revere as he had his grandfather was great joy to John. He was beginning to find out that it is love which smooths life's pathway. It was that which made the blacksmith's home such a happy spot that he could forget his woes that day. Like the pilgrim, his burden had rolled off as he entered its door.

The next morning he started on his journey eastward to his grandfather's.

"I know you have taken the right road, John," said Mr. Webster, looking at his bright face. "God bless you, my boy!"

No one had spoken such words to John since the day he rode away from his father's house.

No one knew in those early days what the simple mission-work of the pious blacksmith and his family would grow into; but it was blessed and prospered until it became a regular missionary station, and an ordained minister was sent to those poor Indians, who were hungry to hear the gospel preached.

Jacob Webster, in his humble, faithful way, con-

tinued to devote his life to the work; and his sister Martha became a missionary to the Indians, and did good and loving service for more than half a century.

Such great results can an all-powerful Master bring out of small beginnings when they are done in His name.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME FROM VIRGINIA.

"WHY, Phœbe, it seems as if our happiest days had come!" Mrs. Baird was sitting in Alan's new house, holding his beautiful baby in her arms. Her eyes overflowed with tears of joy.

"Yes, ma, I did n't know I could be so glad to get home. O Alan, the baby 's too sweet for anything!"

"I knew you 'd say so; but you did n't seem to be in any hurry to see him. Think of your keeping ma away off in Virginia till little Alan 's nearly three months old. Nettie and I thought it was dreadful, and so did pa."

"No, Alan," protested Mr. Baird. "I knew your ma would come home as soon as she got courage for the journey."

"Yes; it was that dreadful stage. Oh! I don't want to do any more travelling."

"That 's good news for pa and me," said Alan.

"And for me, too," said Nettie. "I 've been very lonesome, ma, without you and Phœbe."

"I was afraid you were, my dear. I never thought of being gone a whole year and more."

"Well, ma, it 's done you a lot of good," said Mr. Baird; "so we can't be sorry. I don't know when I 've seen you looking so well. And Phœbe 's come back prettier than ever! I wonder somebody in Virginia did n't steal her."

"As if I could leave ma! I don't ever intend to!"

"Oh! if I could have spared Phœbe, nothing would have pleased her Aunt Rachel better than to keep her another year. I know I was selfish not to be willing to leave her."

"No, you were n't, ma. I could n't have been happy without you. But, oh, we did have a delightful time, pa!"

"Well, I hope you 've come home to have a good time, child; you deserve it, I 'm sure."

The travellers had just arrived, and had stopped at Alan's house at the end of the lane, before going home. Thad stood beside the porch in charge of the horses.

"There 's Thad still waiting, when I told him to go on, and we 'd follow," said Mr. Baird.

"He does n't want to go, pa, till he 's seen the baby," said Phœbe.

"Of course not!" cried Alan. "Thad 'll be just as pleased as anybody. Here, ma, do give me little Alan. It looks as if you were n't ever going to let anybody else touch him again."

Of course they all followed the baby to the porch.

"Thad, I 'm the proudest man in Chilhowee," Alan said, as he put his child into the old slave's arms.

"Heah am little massa! You hab sutenly got sumpin' to boast of now, Marse Alan. Hi! hi! little massa! See him cockin' his eye at me a'ready! My! but he am a peart chile, an' jes' de pictèr o' little missy!"

"So he is, Thad," said his mistress, evidently pleased with the likeness.

"I think he looks like Nettie," said Alan. "But he 's bound to grow up like me."

"Oh, then I pity him!" said Mr. Baird, but he laughed; he was proud of Alan.

Mrs. Baird was so engrossed with the baby that she could scarcely look at the house, but Alan boasted of it. "You see the good of being slow about such things, ma. We 've got everything here we wanted. Nettie and I made sure of having it built just to suit."

"Yes; but if we 'd waited a little longer," said

Nettie, "we might have had a prettier pattern yet. There 's a lovely house going up at White Apple now. It 'll be the show place of the neighborhood."

"Oh, Ned Pratt's!" said Phœbe. "You wrote to us about it, pa."

"Yes; it 's about the strangest thing that 's happened, that Ned should marry Leigh Gordon's sister, when everybody thought Don Craig was booked for her."

"Ned 'll be reckoned the rich man of Chilhowee Valley when he brings his bride home," said Alan. "I wonder at Don for letting such a chance slip."

"Yes; for he can get ahead of every one when he wants to," said Mrs. Baird. "I saw that when he was a boy."

"He 's different from Ken. I tell you, I feel set up, ma, by the way I 've got ahead of Dr. Ken."

"How 's that, Alan? I thought his practice was a great deal better than yours."

"His practice! that 's not what I meant. I don't want his work. It would half kill me to do the riding he does. But here 's little Alan, my boy! and Ken 's got only a girl!"

"Oh! but that 's what pleases them best," said

his mother. "Mrs. Craig wrote to me that Kenneth had so many brothers and only one sister, so the baby girl delighted him and all of them a great deal more than if it had been a boy."

"Oh, well! that 's the way to talk, of course, but everybody 's prouder of a boy than a girl; I am, I know."

"We must go to see Mrs. Craig the very first chance, Phœbe," said Mrs. Baird. "How I have missed her and everybody at the parsonage, and I 've felt so sorry for them because of the anxious times they 've had about John."

"They 're not over yet," said Mr. Baird. "They got a letter some time back saying he was just starting to his grandfather's. It 's a tremendous journey; there 's no telling whether he 'll ever get there."

"I don't think I could bear up if I had a son bent on travelling as John Craig is," said Mrs. Baird. "There, Nettie, take your pretty baby. I don't know how to leave him, but I must go and see how my house looks."

"You 'll hardly know it after being away so long," said Alan. He walked up the lane with his mother. Phœbe and her father hurried ahead, and were waiting on the porch when they reached the gate.

"It does look different, Alan. What 's happened?"

"I thought you had forgotten it, ma," laughed Alan.

Phœbe's face beamed with delight, and her father looked unusually alert and pleased.

"O ma, do come and see!" cried Phœbe. "Pa has given me my parlor!"

"O child! Why, husband!" Mrs. Baird could scarcely have been more surprised, and her delight equalled Phœbe's, when she saw, not only the parlor, but a new guest-room. "We could n't have a better welcome home than this!"

"Were n't we good at keeping a secret, ma?" said Alan. "You never dreamed of it, did you?"

"When we pulled down Alan's office," said Mr. Baird, "it just struck me that the lumber would help build the parlor; and then, when Alan's workmen got hold, it was n't much harder to put up two rooms than one."

"They 're such nice rooms," said Phœbe. "I 'm so glad to have them; for, oh! I 've wanted them ever so long."

"But now 's the time we need them most of all," said her mother; "for, after living so handsomely

at Sister Rachel's, I was sorry to think how much you 'd miss."

"But now I can have as pretty a parlor as Alice Murray's was."

"And I 'll take pleasure in having visitors, with such a fine spare room. Why, husband, you 've made the house just what it ought to be!"

"I reckon we could n't palm Aunt Hadassah off on ma, the next time she comes; but I 'd like to," Alan thought.

"I wish we could have got the improvements sooner," said Mr. Baird; "but something always seemed in the way. Phoebe was a good little girl to want to come home even without the new rooms."

"O pa! I 'd stay with ma and you, no matter what kind of a house we had."

Mrs. Baird was right about the anxious days at the parsonage. But at last came a letter to the parson from Grandfather Craig.

"Our dear wanderer has come, weary, footsore; he walked all the way. But he is well, and glad to be here. You know well with what a joyful welcome his grandma and I received him. I write hastily to catch the post. John sends love. Thank God he is safe!"

This letter was read by John's father and mother

with tears of thankfulness. "What joyful tidings!" said Mrs. Craig.

"What a blessed providence!" said the parson. "Our boy is with the best guide; I count that father will be wiser than I in dealing with him. His visit there will fit him better for home."

The parson wrote letters to Hugh and Don, and Mr. Webster, although it was hard to know how the blacksmith's would reach him. "I will give it a chance, for I 'm sure Jacob will be glad to hear of John's safety."

Alec and Bessie, though they had not known the depths of their parents' anxiety, now shared in their joy.

"Oh, John 'll have a splendid time now!" said Bess.

"Well," said Alec, "I did n't want to do a single thing that he 's done since he went away, till now. But oh! I do want to go to grandpa's."

"Maybe you will some day, my son," said his father; "but now you may ride to the post with these letters, and then take grandpa's letter to Ken; he 'll be very glad to know John 's safe."

Mrs. Craig and Bessie drove in the gig to Murray Hill with the good news.

"How thankful I am that you are relieved," said

Uncle Will. "I really don't see how you could have borne the anxiety much longer."

"No; but now the load 's gone. And yet through all these months I have never been able to say that we should not have allowed John to go."

"No," said Janet; "it was like Will in the war. John went away to fight a battle. I have often thought of it."

The next week's mail brought a letter from John to his father.

"I can't begin to tell you what fine times I 'm having; but then you know grandpa and grandma, so you 'll understand. I 've got your room, and I sit in the same place at the table where you always sat, and grandma is knitting stockings for me; she had a pair finished when I got here. And, oh, the very best thing is Chestnut, my new horse! He 's the finest I ever rode, better than Buncombe, I do believe. Grandpa 's had him ready waiting for me for more than a year. He 's so glad I 'm here to ride him. Tell Alec to look out for me; for some day I 'll come riding home on Chestnut, fine as can be. But grandpa would like me to make him a very long visit first; and I certainly shall, if you can spare me.

"He wants me to learn surveying while I have

nothing else to do. He says it 's a good thing to know, even when a man has only his own property to manage; and if I ever want to travel again it may help me to make money. I know that by being with Colonel Fletcher. But I have n't told you much about him. I 'll have a great deal to tell when I get home. I 'm telling everything to grandpa and grandma now. And I 'm really very busy, because I ride out with grandpa every day to see the farm; he wants me to understand all about it. It 's a beautiful place; I don't know but what I like it as well as Chilhowee."

This letter delighted the home circle, and Alec and Bess discussed it with great interest. Their father had to describe his old room, which was now John's, and to remember where his seat had been at the table.

"And you were just a boy then, like John?" said Alec.

"I like it best where John says he 's coming home on a beautiful new horse," said Bess.

"Oh! that won't be for a long time," said Alec. "He likes it too well at grandpa's. But I 'm glad he 's got Chestnut, because he walked such an awful long way from Jacob Webster's, hundreds of miles, and he ought to get a ride after that."

"Yes," said their mother. "I guess grandpa thinks John really earned Chestnut."

"Walking for a horse!" said Alec. "Well, that would n't be so bad."

Mrs. Baird came with congratulations instead of condolences when she visited the parsonage, which was not for some time after her return home, on account of her devotion to her little grandson.

"I 've been so happy myself lately, Mrs. Craig," she said, "that I could n't bear to think it was your turn to be anxious. I can't tell you how glad I am that everything 's come out right about John."

"Yes, wonderfully right. And now we can rejoice together, for I know your little baby Alan is as great a joy to you as Kenneth's darling little Janet is to us."

"Oh! I 'm so delighted with the child that I can scarcely tear myself away from him. And to think of my being gone so long that you saw him before I did! Well, I 'm certainly glad to be home."

Mrs. Baird did not stay very long, being anxious to return to little Alan.

"She talked 'baby' all the time she was here," said Bess. "I wanted her to tell about that stage-ride just where Don left off. I 'm glad mother is n't talking every minute about Ken's baby."

“But she ’s just as sweet as little Alan, and bigger,” said Alec. “Thad ’s got lots to tell about that journey, though. He says there was no end to the troubles they had; but when they once got safe home to Virginia, it seemed next thing to heaven, everything was so pleasant.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

DON'S CALL TO BELLEVUE.

DON was deeply interested in his work in Powell's Valley. His time was fully occupied. Besides the church in which he ministered, he had a distant mission where he spent much time.

His poor people, his scattered sheep, won his love; he worked for them with all his heart, and was rejoiced at their devotion to him.

He sometimes thought of that wonderful Sunday in Bellevue; indeed, the vision of Agnes Hamilton often came to him, as clear and entrancing as at the first; it was as if her voice sounded in his ears. But his feelings were too sacred to put into words, even to himself. He had no hope of seeing her again in this world. But Don firmly believed in a blessed future, in a holy, happy heaven, where heart answers to heart. In that day his highest aspirations would be satisfied, for so it was written. Now Agnes was like a star brightening his path; it was his joy to walk in the light.

One day, during his second year in Powell's Valley, he received a letter written in a strange hand, having the Bellevue postmark. He glanced at the signature; there were several names affixed, the first being "Enoch Butler, M.D." Don read the letter with deep interest. It was a call to the church in Bellevue, recently made vacant by the death of the Rev. Mr. Foster.

Don was greatly surprised, and of course gratified. His first thought was that now he might again see Agnes Hamilton — wonderful! for it had seemed an impossibility. Then he remembered his people. Could he leave them, this flock in the wilderness? Who would love them as he did? The church in Bellevue could easily secure some one else; it was an attractive place, the people were rich, this letter in his hand told him as much; but who would come to this little church in the valley, and to the mission where the work was hard and love the only reward? And, then, he was in the middle of the year; could he in honor leave them?

Besides, all his tastes were for the kind of life he now led. He meditated beside still waters, he studied his sermons as he walked in the fields or rode through the forest. He loved nature, and here he saw her in great beauty and grandeur. The

everlasting hills, the giant trees, were his friends; they inspired him. He remembered that Sunday in Bellevue, how he felt that he could not write his sermon in a room, but must go the brook. He had finished that sermon since he came to the valley, and preached it. "He leadeth me." Now he wanted to feel his Shepherd's guiding hand. He must think of his life-work, of his sacred vows, not of Agnes.

After due consideration, he wrote, declining the call, because he felt it his duty to continue in his present work, thanking them for the honor they had done him, and offering, in appreciation of their courtesy, to preach for them some Sunday in the near future if they desired it.

"I 've heard father say that it was due to a church to be willing to give them a Sunday if it was possible, after they had done a minister the honor of giving him an unsolicited call. I 'm glad I can do it. I intended to take a little holiday soon, and that 's how I can spend it."

An answer came from Bellevue, accepting Don's offer for the Sunday, and strongly urging him to reconsider his declination; they were very much in earnest in desiring him for their pastor. There was a personal note from Dr. Butler, inviting Don to be

his guest; he was no longer at the inn, but was now married, and had a home of his own.

“Can it be possible that his wife is Agnes Hamilton?” What a pang the thought brought to Don. It revealed his heart to him. What would Bellevue be with all hope of Agnes lost? But he tried to banish these thoughts. He reminded himself that he was going to spend this Sunday there for the sake of duty, not for Agnes.

On his long ride to Bellevue he schooled himself to meet Dr. Butler’s wife as he would a stranger, even if she should prove to be Agnes.

It was again Saturday afternoon when he rode through the streets of the beautiful town. How vividly he remembered his first view of it! Would his heart ever again be so light and untrammelled as it had been on that day?

Don received a most cordial welcome from Dr. Butler and his wife, who was a lady from Georgia, beautiful and charming, but as different from Agnes as Eleanor was.

The next day the church was crowded at both services. Don’s hearers were doubly regretful that he still declined their call, after the Sunday of enjoyment which he gave them.

He intended to remain in town over Monday, and

several of the prominent church people invited him to call, Mrs. Hamilton among the number. He had seen Agnes in the congregation, both morning and evening.

Don was aware that these invitations were given mainly in the hope that personal interviews might be of some avail towards inducing him to still agree to be their pastor. He knew such would not be the result, but he promised to call at Mrs. Hamilton's.

"I cannot tell you, Mr. Craig," said Mrs. Hamilton, in the next day's interview, "how sorry we all are that you do not see your way clear to come to us."

Don sat in her parlor, where she and her son and daughter entertained him. He thought the room more attractive than any he had ever before seen, even at Leighton. Many articles in it had a look of having come from far away. Don could imagine that they each had a story.

But his eyes did not dwell much on his surroundings, for here was Agnes! the sight of whom entranced him as at the first. If he were pastor of Bellevue church, what an opportunity he might have to pursue this acquaintance; but now he was giving himself no chance, and he said, —

"I am sorry, too, Mrs. Hamilton. That I should

be wanted here has been a very pleasant surprise to me. But I really cannot come."

"Perhaps you don't know," said Jasper, "how very much we need just such a man as you, young and enthusiastic, to build up our church."

"Yes," said Mrs. Hamilton. "Poor Mr. Foster was in failing health all this past year, and of course the church has suffered."

"So Dr. Butler and others have told me. But surely you can find some one who will fill his place as well as I, — better, — for I am only a beginner."

"We cannot call you that, Mr. Craig," said Agnes, "when we remember how you preached for us a year and a half ago, and know that you have been at work ever since."

What a siren's voice was this! And had Agnes kept count of the time as he had since that wonderful Sunday? But he must not yield; he must be true to his charge.

"I should like to tell you about my work," he said. "Then you will understand better why I can't leave my people. But it is a long story, Mrs. Hamilton. You may not care to listen."

"We shall be glad to hear all you have to say, Mr. Craig." Stately Mrs. Hamilton had been completely won by simple-hearted Don.

"The church in Powell's Valley is in the midst of many good farms; the soil is fertile. The people are able to live very comfortably. Here I preach the first and third Sundays in each month. The valley is narrow, and bounded on the northwest by the Cumberland Mountains. Lying southeast of our valley we see a vast extent of hills and ridges, covered with various growths of timber, with here and there a spot where some poor man has settled, expecting to make a support by farming and hunting. The earth is rocky and gravelly, so that it will not yield much, no matter how diligently it is tilled. But a mountain region, of course, affords many kinds of game, so the people need not starve. I have a mission among those hills, where I spend much of my time."

"What a hard field you must have, Mr. Craig!" exclaimed Jasper.

"No. It is the poor mountaineers that have the dreary life, the hardships, not I."

"You are the one to carry joyful news to them," said Agnes.

"Yes; and when I find them glad to listen, my work is easy."

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,'" said Mrs. Ham-

ilton. "Think of Mr. Craig's privilege, Agnes!" She was beginning to see why the young pastor could not leave his people.

"There are more to preach to in the summer," continued Don, "for some of the ridges afford grass; and the people from the valley take their surplus stock of cattle and young horses to them for summer pasturage, and go once a week to salt them; young men or boys have that task. When they know I am near they come to listen. Sometimes I preach a little sermon on purpose for them.

"Then in the hunting-season the hunters like a sermon in their camps. I ride thirty or forty miles from home to look after them; there is no one else to do it."

"You would n't have to work near as hard in Bellevue as you do now," urged Jasper.

Don's look showed that no offer of an easy berth could tempt him. "I'm glad to be busy. The only trouble is, there's not time enough for all there is to do."

"I can imagine you have n't much leisure to enjoy your home," said Mrs. Hamilton.

"I am really at home a great deal. And I've grown very fond of the place. I look out on the Cumberland Mountains. I have a grand view. We

see a great variety of foliage; but on the summit there is a vast ledge of limestone rock, presenting a perpendicular wall, several miles in extent, and mounting up one or two hundred feet."

"Inaccessible, is it not?" asked Jasper.

"Yes; the immense rock prevents any crossing by men. The top of the mountain is the boundary line between Virginia and Kentucky. But this is geography which you all know."

"No, we are glad to hear it," said Mrs. Hamilton. "This part of the world is strange to us; we are newcomers, comparatively."

"Eighteen miles below my home is Cumberland Gap, in the extreme west end of Virginia. There the State terminates in a narrow point between Kentucky and Tennessee. I know the region well. I am in the saddle a great deal."

"You must be," said Jasper. "Your horse will wear out, if you don't."

"I don't know what I should do without Buncombe. But he's not a hard-worked horse, like many I see; those that bring salt through our valley, for instance."

"Where does your salt come from?" asked Agnes.

"From Goose Creek salt-works, in Kentucky."

There is an old salt-well about five miles from us, but it was abandoned because the per cent of salt in the water was so small that it was unprofitable to work it."

"What a pity!" said Jasper. "And now a long, troublesome journey must be taken for it."

"Yes. They bring it over Cumberland Gap; that, of course, is the place for crossing the mountain."

"It is n't a complete gap," said Jasper.

"No; this gap is as if it were a notch in the mountain, cutting it about half way down. A complete gap, you know, is made by a stream of water passing through a mountain ridge."

"Like the French Broad in the Alleghanies," said Agnes. "We have seen that."

"Well, this is far different, of course. It makes a tedious journey. There is a pretty good turnpike road, and wagons can cross it; but the usual way of bringing salt is to pack it in bags on horses. It's a lonely ride. The men try to form a company. I have learned to know the seasons when the salt is coming; and if I ride to meet the caravan, sometimes the men are glad to camp early, and have a sermon, even if it is n't Sunday."

"And you like that!" said Jasper.

"Indeed I do! The men have had a long, dreary

journey, dangerous often. Some have told me that the blessed Word was like light on their pathway; they had never known what it was to attend a religious service before."

"And this is what you have been doing, Mr. Craig, in these months since we saw you!" exclaimed Jasper, who had formed a great admiration for this enthusiastic young clergyman. "I don't wonder at you for declining Bellevue Church!"

"I still wonder at the call, Mr. Hamilton. I was such a great stranger among you. Only that one Sunday here. I thought most likely all had forgotten the events of that day except myself."

"Oh! you made quite a stir in our quiet little town," said Mrs. Hamilton. "The call was a consequence of that Sunday night's sermon, but all knew of your kind and skilful attention to Judge Talbot. Personally I felt greatly indebted to you for relieving me of so much anxious care in the absence of Dr. Butler."

"And the judge is loud in his praises," said Jasper. "It 's a pity you can't meet."

"I 'm glad he recovered. You see him, do you?"

"Yes; he 's been here several times. He never fails to stop as he 's going back and forth to court.

He says mother's kindness during his illness is something he cannot forget."

"Judge Talbot won't trust the stage, though, after that accident," said Agnes. "He travels on horseback."

Don, as he listened, thought, "The judge already has more foothold here than I can ever hope to have."

When Don took leave, the touch of Agnes's hand seemed to him like a farewell, though her mother said, "I sincerely hope we shall see you again some day, Mr. Craig, for you have greatly interested us in your work."

The interview had been a long and delightful one; it grieved Don there could be no more. "But it is my own choice," thought he, as he turned away from the house; "and I don't see how it can be otherwise. Agnes has n't had me in her thoughts since that first day as I have had her in mine. How different it might be if I were staying here; then I might hope to win her, but now — And there is the judge coming often."

It seemed to Don as if his star had set, just when he was in fullest enjoyment of its radiance; for that hour in the presence of Agnes had been bliss.

But soon his serenity returned, for it was his habit in trouble and perplexity to turn to One who had promised to bear his burdens. “‘He leadeth me.’ If it is away from Agnes, so be it. He, Himself, will be my joy.”

That evening a number of gentlemen called on Don in the interest of Bellevue Church, having been invited by Dr. Butler, who was determined to leave no effort untried to secure this promising young minister, to whom he had taken a great liking. But Don was still firm in declining. He had given a far more serious and thorough consideration to their call than they imagined; they did not know all its attractions to him; and still he heard a voice they could not hear, calling him back to his work among those sheep in the wilderness.

The next morning he left Bellevue. Dr. Butler, as he rode with him on his way to see a country patient, expressed his deep regret and disappointment.

“I don’t know when I’ve set my heart on anything more than on getting you here, Mr. Craig,” he said. “I was so carried away by that skilful bit of surgery, and then by that sermon, preached on the spur of the moment, and yet perfect, though you did n’t know it. Oh! why should you go back.

to that field you have been telling us of, to live in obscurity, or more likely die from overwork?"

"Do I look as if I was in danger of that, Dr. Butler?"

"No; but your story sounds so. Strange, how you and Judge Talbot came into my interest together; and the judge is the one who finds it easy to come back and forth, when I'd so much sooner it had been you."

"It's pleasant to be wanted. I'm glad I have won such a place in your esteem. But what have you against the judge?"

"Nothing, really, except that he's not as wise as a man of his learning should be. He is infatuated with Miss Hamilton; that is what brings him, though she gives him no encouragement, I imagine. At any rate he'll find his mistake if he ever comes to the point, for Miss Hamilton will never marry a slaveholder; I know that for a certainty."

"But her mother has" —

"Slaves? no, never! Mrs. Hamilton is an eastern lady, and holds different views from those hereabout; but she is finely cultivated, of good family, a grand educator; we are pleased to welcome her. Of course she must have servants; we are glad to hire them to her, for she does well by them. But

there 's no hope for the judge, for his fortune is in slaves."

After parting with Dr. Butler, Don pursued his solitary journey. The doctor's last words were a revelation. Here was a new point in unison between him and the Hamiltons. Certainly with such views the judge was not in the way. And again hopes and visions took possession of Don's mind.

CHAPTER XXIV.

POWELL'S VALLEY.

"I HAVE decided to make Don a visit," said Parson Craig one day, after reading the letter which his son had written, telling of his Sunday at Bellevue.

"I 'm glad to hear it, Donald," said his wife. "Don lost his trip home by being so generous to that strange church. There 's no knowing when he 'll be able to take another holiday. But it will be more than made up to him when he sees you."

"This is the first letter Don ever wrote that I did n't understand," continued his father, glancing at the letter again.

"It looks as if he did n't enjoy his visit to Bellevue," said his mother.

"Yes, though he does n't say so; and naturally such an event ought to be very gratifying."

"I have an idea he did n't care for the place, he had so little to say about his first visit there."

"I remember. It seemed to make no impression on him, but he must have done or said something that impressed the people; preached well, no doubt, or he 'd never have got that call. Now he tells almost nothing, even about this last event. It 's set me thinking."

"I hope he 's not sorry he declined the call."

"No, he can't be; his reasons were good; I approved them. But it 's not like our Don to be reserved about pleasant or important matters."

"He can hardly be sick, for he writes as if he was hard at work again."

"The thing 's a puzzle. I can't be satisfied till I see him."

So Parson Craig took the three days' ride which lay between him and his son. Don had not been home in the year and a half since his work began. The time had seemed long to the parson; for this boy was his Joseph, whose presence was joy to him.

He was glad when he drew near to the mountain with its rocky crown; now Don's home was not far off.

Yes, here was the church, and the little parsonage, and Buncombe cropping grass beside the fence. The parson had intended to take Don by surprise,

but Buncombe's glad whinny at sight of him brought his master to the door. It pleased the father to see that his son looked bright and well.

"O father, you 've come just when I wanted you! How could you know it?"

"Mayhap because my heart is as your heart, my son."

Don had thought that he could never tell the true story of those two visits to Bellevue to mortal ears, for it was Agnes's story.

But that evening, sitting with his father in his quiet study, he told him all. The parson listened, absorbed, entranced. This went beyond his imaginings. How charming Don's simple love-story sounded in the father's ears, and how interesting were all the accompanying events.

"Now, what are you going to do, Don?" asked the parson, when the tale was ended.

"I 'm thinking of writing to Mrs. Hamilton," said Don.

"That will do right well for the first step. I hope you will not take too long to think about it, though. It seems to me the time for action has come. Since this second visit to Bellevue you can no longer dream of far-off bliss; you want it near at hand, and soon, not waiting for the eternal years.

Human nature is differently constituted from that, though the thought of a never ending future is what gives life to present joys."

"Yes, and makes even the waiting years happy," said Don.

The next morning, though the parson rose early, he found Don already in his study, writing. A finished letter, folded, ready for sealing, lay on his desk, while he wrote another.

"I have taken your advice, father, about not delaying; see!" The letter beside him was directed to Mrs. Hamilton.

"I trusted you would. May God's blessing be on your effort, my son!"

The father was pleased to see that Don's mind was evidently at ease. Presently the second letter was finished.

"Won't you please look over this, father, while I begin to seal? It's a letter to Dr. Butler about Collins. It strikes me that he may be the right man for Bellevue Church."

"I should n't be surprised. It's just such a position as his father has been wanting to hear of for him. Dr. Collins wrote me that he intended to keep his son for his assistant till something very desirable offered."

“Well, I think Bellevue will satisfy them. And a cultivated man like Collins will just fit there. He has two educations, you may say; studied law as well as theology, you know.”

“I really hope they ’ll want him. I ’m fond of Norton Collins, and Ken and Hugh will be delighted if he gets a good berth. You ’ve done well by him in this letter, Don.”

“I have n’t said more than he deserves. It ’s strange, but really I did n’t think of him in connection with this vacancy till after I had finished my letter to Mrs. Hamilton.”

“I can’t wonder,” thought the parson. “The perplexities of love are a new experience to our serene-minded Don.”

“Now we ’ll have breakfast,” said Don, having sealed his letters. “Then, as we ride to the mail, I can show you something of our valley.”

“I rode through it yesterday with my eyes open, and rejoiced that it was your lot to live in the midst of such beauty and grandeur.”

“Yes; I have something that helps to make up for Chilhowee, and my work does the rest.”

The parson had but a few days to spare for the visit, but there was a Sunday in them. He preached in Don’s church, which made it a proud day for

the young pastor, who thought no other clergyman his father's equal.

Parson Craig learned more about Don's work in that visit than a year of letters could tell. And he more than ever approved his remaining.

"It is a spot from which you can influence many; you have already won your people's hearts. I am beginning to hope you will be as happy here as I have been in Chilhowee."

"O father, that would be wonderful!"

"Yes; but you are enough like me, Don, to make me think it possible."

Don remembered Agnes's eyes, as she listened to his description of his home, his mountain views. What an opportunity that day had given him! He was glad she knew of his work and of the simple style in which he lived, tenting with the mountaineers, camping with the salt caravans. She seemed in sympathy with it all. Oh! if he could but win her, his heart's desire, what happiness might be his!

"You must have a new parsonage here before you bring home a bride," his father said, interrupting Don's reverie.

"O father, your thoughts fly far ahead!"

But the parson pleased himself by drawing a

plan for Don's new house in the last hour of his visit.

When, some weeks later, Don wrote that Mrs. Hamilton had consented to a correspondence between him and her daughter Agnes, the father thought, "Now Don has clear sailing, he has a chance to win his prize;" for he knew well what charming letters his son could write.

Now time went on wings in Powell's Valley, and in Chilhowee Valley as well; for the parson was happy and satisfied regarding all his sons. John seemed to fit in wonderfully well at his grandfather's, who planned now to give him charge of his farm when he became of age.

"That is well," said Parson Craig to his wife, when his father first proposed it. "Property which has been in our family for five generations should be prized and well cared for, and John is the one to be proud of the responsibility."

"Yes, it will make him feel of consequence, and that is gratifying to one of John's disposition."

"To whom is it not? that 's human nature. And here 's Alec for the home farm; I suppose I ought to be satisfied that those two boys did n't care to go to college, when we see how much they 're needed on father's place and our own."

At last John came home on his long-promised visit, riding up to his father's door like a conquering hero, at least so it seemed to Alec and Bess. His parents now saw in this once wayward son all that their hearts desired.

"I could n't wait a day longer, mother," said John. "It seemed as if Chestnut could n't go fast enough after I once got into the valley. I believe I 'm as glad to get home as I was to go away, oh, gladder!"

"That may well be, my son; for you make us all happy now. What a man you 've grown to be!"

"You 're every bit as tall as Ken," said Alec.

"I 'll be taller yet. Grandpa thinks I 'll not stop till I 'm six foot two."

"Very likely," said the parson. "That was his father's height, and you 're just his build."

"You 'll all look like giants when Hugh gets home," said Bessie. "He 'll always be our little brother."

"But you won't be our little sister much longer," laughed John. It set him to counting the time he had been away when he saw how Bess had grown.

"Hugh 's tall enough," said Alec, "but he 's so slim."

John had only arrived that morning; but he was so eager to renew his acquaintance with all the old Chilhowee scenes, and to see his friends and relatives, that Alec and he started immediately after dinner to ride to Kenneth's.

"I want to see little Janet, of all things," John said. "Ken wrote to me that she was the sweetest and prettiest child that ever lived."

"So she is," agreed Alec. "You don't know what fun it is to be an uncle so long as you have n't seen her."

"Well, Chestnut will soon carry me to Dr. Ken's now."

Presently John became silent. Alec thought he was absorbed in looking at the once familiar scenes through which they were passing. But John had a burden on his mind regarding Alec, and now had come the time for ridding himself of it, since they were alone together, and could speak freely. He suddenly said, —

"Alec, you 're just the same age now that I was when I wanted to go away from here so badly that I sometimes thought I 'd even run away; do you never feel so? I wish you 'd tell me truly whether you don't want to go on a long, long holiday like the one I had."

"Why, no!" exclaimed Alec in surprise. "I like Chilhowee better than any other place. I always said so, even before you went away."

"Yes, I know; but would n't you feel different if you knew you had a chance? You 've never been anywhere."

"Oh yes, I have! to Maryville, and Willowdale; I was there a whole week."

"And that contents you! a week!"

"It seemed a long time, because I learned so much that I 'd been wanting to know. I was studying about birds with Dr. Temple; and now I can go on by myself, and it 's like play. I 'll show you my collection the first chance. I 'm adding to it all the time. It 's such a pleasure to me to find a rare bird."

"I wish you could see the strange birds that sometimes come flitting about at grandpa's."

"I reckon I shall some day. Father 'll spare me for a visit there when he can. That 's a kind of going away I 'd like."

"Oh! I know you would. And would n't I just like to see you there! But I was thinking if you wanted to go on the same kind of a trip I did, I 'd help you. I 've got money now, and I 'd like to do it."

"Oh! I would n't go on that sort of travels! I could n't be persuaded," said home-loving Alec.

"I reckon not, because you 're different from me. But I 'm glad I went, even when I remember all the troubles I got into. Staying at grandpa's is a great deal better, but I never should have believed it if I had n't seen the world. But even if you won't go away, I want you to have this money." John brought his horse close enough to Alec's to put a purse into his hand.

It was a long knitted purse of many colored silk and steel beads, with bead tassels and steel rings to keep the money safe. The coins looked tempting as they shone through the meshes.

"Oh, thank you, John! how generous you are! but I don't think you ought to give it to me. I don't need it."

"I won't be satisfied unless you take it, Alec. It belongs to you, truly." John spoke very earnestly. "When I went away, and left you to take care of the farm all alone, I felt very sorry about it, but was going to make it straight by sending you money as soon as ever I got any, but I kept losing; you know all about that. When I got to grandpa's I had only two fips left."

"O John! it 's enough to keep me from want-

ing to travel just to hear about all you went through."

"But it seemed as if it was all made up the very first day I got to grandpa's. Oh, how kind they were! I can just see their faces now, the way they looked at me! Grandma hurried to get supper quick, and grandpa hunted up some of his clothes for me. I sat at the table dressed in one of grandpa's suits, even to his boots! and I don't think I ever felt so happy, or talked so fast." John laughed; it was pleasant to remember.

"Then I studied surveying, and grandpa said I ought to do some work to clinch it in my mind. He found a job for me not far from home, and I was glad to do it. When I got paid, I put half the money in that purse that grandma gave me, and saved it for you."

The happy ring in John's voice showed how glad he was to think that at last he was straight with his brother; though generous, simple-hearted Alec had never felt that he owed him anything. John would not listen to any of Alec's protests against receiving the money.

"It 's yours, Alec. I don't need it. Grandpa gives me enough for everything. When I'm twenty-one he wants me to take charge of the farm, and

then I 'll be really rich. When I first got that money, I thought it would help to buy you a horse. I wanted you to have one as good as Chestnut; and now you have, since Uncle Alec 's given you Liberty. Now you will be able to use the money for something else, just whatever you want to."

"Was n't it wonderful that Uncle Alec had a fine horse ready for me just when Snip was past work? But he 's always remembering me some way or other. It 's worth while to be named Alexander Murray Craig. Uncle called him Liberty because he looked like his old war-horse that was shot from under him in battle. Mother says we ought always to keep the name, to remember Great-Uncle Alec's horse, that carried him safe through the Revolution."

Presently it was Alec's turn to be silent. That purse in his pocket had set him to thinking. He was a boy not quick at deciding, always taking time to consider; but when once his decision was made, he was satisfied to abide by it.

Suddenly he said, "I know how I 'd like to spend this money, John; and it 's in travelling, after all!"

John was pleased. "I thought you 'd want to go somewhere, if you began to think about it."

"Yes; and it 'll give me the greatest pleasure in the world if I can do it." Alec's eyes sparkled. "It 's to ride to Kentucky and back with Dr. Temple. Think of the chance for new birds! The doctor 's going soon to see about his property there. Ken can tell us all his plans. He hears often from Willowdale."

"As soon as we get home I 'll ask father to let you go," said John. "And I think he certainly will; for he agreed to my plan, though that was only a wild-goose chase."

"This will be a wild-bird chase. O John! your money 's going to give me a very great deal of pleasure."

For some time John enjoyed the enviable distinction of being of first importance in the family circle. When at last his visit was over, and he was returning to his grandfather's, Alec and he rode together for the first stage, as far as Willowdale, where Alec was to meet Dr. Temple, and begin that pleasant holiday which John's generosity had made possible.

"But I 'm coming back, father," Alec said at parting. "That 's really the best of it."

"It certainly is to us, my son," said the parson.

"We 'll all be glad to come back whenever we

can," said John, "to revisit the old stamping-ground, as grandfather says."

"But you 're every one of you glad as can be to get away," said Bess.

"That is what makes happy partings," said her mother.

"Yes," said her father; "if I must part with my children, I 'm glad to see them ride away with light hearts and smiling faces."

CHAPTER XXV.

A GREAT CATASTROPHE.

BABY ALAN, or "Little Massa" as he was often called, was the idol of the whole Baird household. He had such hold on his father's heart that Alan often gave up his most cherished pleasures that he might fondle or amuse the child.

"I don't believe I was ever as happy in my life, Phœbe, as since I 've had this sweet child for my pet," said the devoted grandmother.

"I think I was as happy that year in Virginia," said Phœbe. "I can never forget Aunt Rachel's kindness."

"No, of course not. And I do believe you would have been glad to stay with her."

"Not without you, ma. But I love Aunt Rachel dearly."

"Well, little Alan's more to me than any sister. I don't see how I could live without seeing him every day. And here 's Nettie beginning to talk of taking him on a visit to her father. I can't bear

the thought of parting with the child even for that."

"Don't worry about it, ma. You know Alan does n't like Dr. Thompson. He 'll put the trip off as long as he can."

"Well, now, Phœbe," said her father, "I reckon the old doctor 'll treat him mighty well when he 's got such a fine child as little Alan to show him. He 'll be as proud of that baby as we are."

"Yes, and coax for a long visit," said Mrs. Baird. "Nettie would agree to it, I 'm afraid."

"Well, ma," argued Mr. Baird, "when you know parting would break your heart, you ought n't to allow yourself to be so wrapped up in the child."

"As if I could help it, husband! You know I was just as devoted to our Alan and Phœbe when they were little."

"Well, there was more reason for that."

It seemed to Mrs. Baird that now the only crook in her lot was that some day she might have to part with the baby. And, after borrowing trouble for a long time, the dreaded day at last came.

Thad rode over to the parsonage with the baby in his arms.

"Little Massa come to say good-by, Mrs. Craig."

"O Thad! is Alan really starting for Eastboro?"

"Yes, ma'am; to-morrer, drekly arter brekfus' dey 's all goin'. Miss Nettie 's set her heart on wisicatin', an' Doc Alan 's keen fer de trip, an' de ole doctor 's sent fer 'em, 'cause he 's hankerin' fer to see Little Massa."

"I don't wonder; Dr. Thompson will be delighted to see him, for he 's a beautiful child."

"De purtiest dat eber wuz! Dat 's what we all thinks. He two year ole now, an' he kin walk, an' talk, an' his fur-off gran'fer ain't goin' ter wait no longer; dey got ter tote Little Massa right up de road to his house, dat 's what he 's writ; an' it 's a pow'ful long way off, too, dat 's de pity of it."

"Yes, I 'm sorry for Mrs. Baird. I know how she 'll miss the child. Come to me, dear. Oh, how well he walks! See, Bessie, he 's as firm on his feet as little Janet, though she 's older."

"Janet was running about everywhere the last time I was up at Ken's, and talking; you ought to hear her, Thad," said Bessie, who did not think any baby the equal of her little niece.

"Dis chile 'u'd be caperin' roun', too, if he felt to hum, an' he kin say 'most everything when he has a mine ter. Say 'gran'daddy,' Little Massa; dar! jes' listen at him! Now, ain't he peart?"

The child was persuaded to display all his little accomplishments.

"Such a sweet, smiling baby," said Mrs. Craig. "I 'm sorry to say good-by to him, Thad."

"Mistis am de one dat 's sorry. I 'low she 'd be 'mos' willin' to go along, sooner 'n live widout him. Now we mus' be trottin'. Mistis said she could n't spare de baby long."

That evening all the Baird family sat on Alan's porch. Mrs. Baird held the baby while Nettie and she talked of the next day's journey, for which all the preparations were made.

Alan was in high spirits; he felt that he was returning to his father-in-law's house in triumph. "I can take the upper hand now with Dr. Thompson," thought he. "He 'll have to treat me like a person of importance if he wants the pleasure of little Alan's company long. I 'll soon let the old fellow know that."

"Do you think it likely the doctor 'll want to keep you up there as partner, Alan?" asked his father.

"I should n't wonder if he did, pa."

"O Alan, don't let him tempt you to stay!" exclaimed his mother. "You have patients here that you ought to come back to."

"They 'd all be satisfied to go to Ken Craig, ma. But I 'm not ready yet for the hard work I 'd find up there. Nettie and I are counting on a fine long holiday. There 's no telling when you 'll see us back, for I want to persuade her to go to Virginia to Aunt Rachel's after she gets tired of staying at her father's."

"Yes, ma," said Nettie. "I think that 's what we 'll do. I 'm quite in the notion of it. We 're taking Till and Sol along, so we 'll not have any trouble with the baby or the horses."

"O Nettie, you tell your worst news last! Alan, how can you think of such a plan?" Mrs. Baird was trembling so with distress that she had to give little Alan to his mother for fear of frightening him.

"Ma, they 'll not do it," said Phoebe. "Nettie and Alan are just teasing us."

"No such thing, Phoebe," said Alan. "Why should n't we go on when we 're once started? Eastboro 's half way to Aunt Rachel's."

"O Alan, think how long you 'd keep the baby away from us!" protested his mother.

"Well now, ma, I reckon you 've forgotten how you and Phoebe stayed away from us a whole year, visiting Aunt Rachel. Our turn 's come now."

"I don't think it would be polite to put that visit

off much longer, ma," said Nettie, "after such cordial invitations as we 've had."

"We were just waiting till the baby got big enough to travel," said Alan; "everybody knows that."

"Yes," said Nettie, "that 's what made pa patient."

"But now the child will really enjoy the journey, ma," said Mr. Baird; "for he does n't like anything better than riding with Alan; I 've noticed that."

"Yes, that 's true, pa; he 's fonder of me than of anybody else," boasted the proud young father. "I just wish you 'd stop fretting, ma, and be as happy as you were before we began to pack up. You can trust me to take care of my own child, I'm sure."

Thad came riding up the lane on Hawkeye; he had been to the blacksmith's to have him new shod for Alan's journey.

"Hold on, Thad; stop here!" cried Alan. "Little Massa wants a ride!"

The child clapped his hands and crowed with delight as Alan rode up and down the garden path, holding him before him on the saddle. Everybody looked at the bright happy baby and his father, who shouted merrily, —

"This is the way the doctor rides;
Gallop in' gee! gallop in' gee!"

Alan, thoughtless and gleeful as any child, waved his hand while Hawkeye was taking quick steps, obeying his master's humor.

It was only a moment's neglect; but in it little Alan, missing the restraining hand, slipped from his seat, and fell heavily to the ground. Every one on the porch screamed in dismay. Alan sprang from his horse; but it was Thad, speechless with horror, who picked up the unconscious baby, and placed him in the arms of his weeping, terrified grandmother.

Never was such a night as when little Alan lay unconscious in his cradle. Nettie was so overcome with grief and anxiety as to be useless in the emergency. Alan, though very much alarmed himself, would not admit it, but tried to be reassuring.

"He has no broken bones," he said. "I'm sure of that, Nettie."

"But he does n't know me, Alan; so there must be something dreadful the matter. Oh, I do wish pa was here! he'd know just what to do."

"As if I did n't know myself. The baby's stunned; but he'll come to, you need n't be afraid he won't."

"But I am, Alan," sobbed Mrs. Baird, as she watched the child. "I think he's going to die."

"Now, ma, frightening Nettie, so that she has to

run away, about a strong, healthy baby like this, too, that 's never been sick a day in his life. I 'd just like you to remember how many times I 've got hurt,—been thrown from my horse, and all kinds of things; but I got over everything. And babies get sick and well again in an hour."

"But this baby is n't sick, he 's hurt," said Mrs. Baird. "O Alan! I 'm so afraid his spine 's injured."

"Or his brain," said Mr. Baird. "I 'm beginning to think it 's something very serious, Alan. You ought to have help. Ken would come as fast as he could, though it is night."

"Oh, do send for Ken!" urged his mother. "Thad can go right off. He 's staying here on purpose to help."

The vision came to Alan of Kenneth standing beside his little innocent child, hurt and like to die through its father's cruel thoughtlessness. How could he endure it, he, who had been so boastful, so triumphant about his boy? What would be Kenneth's verdict? It seemed as if he heard him say, "You are your child's murderer."

He turned almost fiercely on his father and mother, and said, "No, I won't send for him! Ken Craig sha'n't come near my baby!"

"Then, what in the world will you do?" Mrs. Baird felt desperate. "He 's getting worse! Don't you see he is? You ought to have Dr. Smith if you won't have Ken. O Phœbe! who could think of our having such trouble as this? Pa, can't you call Thad? maybe he could tell us something to do."

"Why, ma, you don't talk as if I was any kind of a doctor," said Alan. "I reckon I know as much as anybody about here. It must be the hot night that keeps the baby from getting better. If it was day-time we 'd have him out of doors, and he 'd soon begin to pick up. I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll get off on that trip with the first streak of day. It 'll be the best thing for little Alan."

"Well, Alan!" Even Mr. Baird was astonished. "Ma and I thought, of course, the journey was given up."

"Oh, you can't take this sick, suffering child jolting over that long road!"

"Yes, I can, ma; I 'd like to know who has the say so about my boy. But you need n't bother about the jolting. I reckon I know how to manage so it 'll be as easy as a cradle."

"I don't see how you 'd dare to meet Dr. Thompson with the child in this state, Alan," said his mother.

“Did n’t I say he ’d be better before we got there, ma? And it ’s the only way that will satisfy Nettie, so that ought to settle it.”

Nettie became more cheerful when she found they were still to go, and at Mrs. Baird’s suggestion lay down to try to get some sleep before the time for starting.

Alan did not allow himself to consider whether or not his decision was wise.

“Of course I don’t want to meet Dr. Thompson now,” thought he. “Ma ’s right there, but it would n’t be as bad as having Dr. Ken about when I ’m in such trouble. I ’ll not endure that; and ma ’ll send for him whether or no, if I don’t get off, she ’s got herself so worked up. And she ’ll tell Ken all about how it happened. I see how they all blame me, when it was all pure accident. Up at the doctor’s we can be as close-mouthed as we choose, that ’s the comfort of it. But oh, what awful trouble I ’m in!”

In the early dawn the unhappy travellers started. Mrs. Baird went back into the house, and sat in the big splint rocking-chair beside the empty cradle. How she had loved that seat in all the months it had been her privilege to watch and tend little Alan; but now she sat there heart-broken, shedding bitter tears, thinking this woe the worst in all her life.

"Ma," said Phœbe, "let 's go home. Pa 's waiting for us, and Thad 's gone to get breakfast ready."

But Mrs. Baird shook her head, and Phœbe busied herself in setting the room in order. It seemed to her mother like getting ready for a funeral. The morning was very dark, not a ray of sunshine appeared. "I wish Alan had been weather-wise," thought Phœbe, as she saw the gathering clouds. "Ma," she said, "we ought to go right away; we won't more than get home before it rains."

"O child! is that what 's making it so dark? Yes, we 'll have to go."

But her decision came too late; the rain poured down before they left the porch, and they were obliged to return to the house.

"Oh! that poor baby, what will become of him?" wailed Mrs. Baird. "Why did n't we know this storm was coming?"

"Ma, Alan was so wild to get off we could n't have stopped him, even if we 'd been sure it would rain."

"No; he was like a frantic man. And we were all too busy to watch the sky. We 'll have to stay here now till this gust 's over." And again Mrs. Baird sat down to cry beside the empty cradle.

"I can't bear to have you wait so long for your

breakfast, ma. I could call Jen from the quarter, and give out from Nettie's stores, if you could eat what she cooks."

"I can't eat anything, Phœbe; but you ought to have your breakfast, after being up all night. It's a new experience to you."

"Don't think of me, ma; I 'm not hungry."

They sat in the quiet, desolate house, watching the storm.

"The baby will be drenched to the skin," said Mrs. Baird; "he was in one of his summer frocks."

"Nettie took plenty of warm clothes for him, and a blanket. I helped her pack them."

"Yes; but they 're in the budget on Till's horse. Alan can't get at them in a hurry. The child 's not fit to go through any more dangers. His strength was gone when they started. O Phœbe! how dreadful it was to see him fall off that horse, just when he was so happy!"

The time seemed very long to the sad-hearted women.

Suddenly Phœbe said, "Ma, we ought to have a fire here in case the rain drives Alan home again."

"It won't. Nothing will stop him. We ought to know Alan by this time."

"If he 's got any sense left, he 'll come back.

He can't have gone far. Oh! I 'll call Jen, and have that fire built." It was a comfort to Phœbe to find something to do.

She went to the back porch, and looked towards the quarter. The door was shut, no smoke came from the chimney. She called Jen and Tip, and even the children's names, but no answer came.

"Ma, I can't make them hear in all this storm. Alan ought n't to have built his quarter so far from the house. I thought Jen would have been getting Tip's breakfast, but there 's no sign of a fire."

"They must be all asleep, Phœbe. They had n't much rest last night. Never mind about the fire. I 'm going home the very minute the rain holds up. It will drive me distracted to stay much longer in this house."

The day was very warm; there was no need of a fire, except for the possibility that the baby might be brought back, of which even Phœbe had very little hope. She sat by the open door. "I hear a horse trotting, ma," she said presently.

"Your pa 's sent Thad with our breakfast, perhaps."

"No, it 's not in the lane. It 's coming down the road."

"Oh! I hope it 's not one of Alan's patients wanting him. I begged him to let them all know when he was going away."

"It would be just like Alan if he did n't. But it 'll be a great pity if somebody 's coming in all this storm, just to miss him. I 'll be really ashamed."

Phœbe stood on the porch to watch and listen. "Whoever it is, is turning into the lane," she said. "O ma! It 's Alan coming back! He 's hurrying ahead of the others!"

Alan put the drenched baby into Mrs. Baird's outstretched arms; and as she looked at its blue, rigid face, she thought it was surely dead.

Alan was now evidently much alarmed; but he said, "No, ma; but he has a chill from getting wet. He must be wrapped in hot blankets right away. Why have n't you a fire ready? I thought, of course, you 'd expect me back when you saw the rain. Do somebody call Jen or Tip to light a fire. We 're all as wet as water can make us."

"Till can go," said Nettie, who had now arrived, and was hovering over the baby, while Mrs. Baird undressed him. "Run, Till; get your father or mother to come quick."

"We want them both, right away," said Alan.

"I 'm afraid they 're asleep," said his mother.

"We should have had the fire, Alan, if Phœbe could only have made them hear."

"Oh! I reckon they 're just smoking their pipes in the quarter, hiding from the rain. They think we 're all gone, and they 'll take holiday; but they 'll find it 's different. This baby 'll keep everybody running. Ma, where 's Thad? Did n't you say he could ride for Ken? I want him to go as fast as pa's best horse can trot."

"He will, of course; but he 's gone home, Alan. You 'll have to send Tip or Sol to call him."

"I thought you knew Sol had n't come back," said Alan. "He 's gone on to Eastboro to fetch Dr. Thompson."

"It 's a good thing," said Mrs. Baird. But she felt all the more distressed, for she saw now that Alan thought the baby's case was desperate.

"I can't be satisfied, ma," said Nettie, "till pa sees little Alan. He knows all about children, and he 's so very skilful. Oh, I wish he was here now!"

"Yes," said Alan; "but we can't look for him under three days."

"Oh, yes, we can, Alan! pa 'll ride night and day to get to the baby when he knows how dreadful it all is."

"I reckon he will, but Sol won't do as much go-

ing up the road. Oh! where 's that fire? Can't we get hold of Thad or Tip or anybody? not even pa? This baby needs everything that anybody can do. These blankets are never going to warm him. I want Ken and Dr. Smith both, since I can't get Dr. Thompson in a hurry. Oh, here 's Thad — and pa! I 'm glad he 's come, for we want his horse."

The basket of breakfast Thad had brought stood untouched, unnoticed. Mrs. Baird and Phœbe gave no thought to their own needs that morning; their hearts were too anxious.

Thad rode for Dr. Craig, and Tip for Dr. Smith; the two physicians lived in opposite directions. Mr. Baird made a fire; and Alan used all the remedies he could devise, but every one could see that he was frightened and hopeless.

"O Alan, he looks worse than he did last night! Oh, my poor baby!" wailed Nettie.

"He is worse," said Mrs. Baird. "He 's sick now as well as hurt. O Alan! if you had only sent for Ken last night."

Alan winced and turned away, but for once he spoke no word of self-justification.

"Take off your wet dress, Nettie," said Phœbe, "or you 'll be sick too."

"Yes, with inflammation of the lungs," said Mrs.

Baird. "I am afraid you and the baby will both have it. O Nettie! why did n't you think of taking care of yourself?"

"Oh! how can I think of anything but my baby? He always had a smile for me, and now he does n't know me."

"He does n't know any of us," said Phœbe.

The three heart-broken women wept together. Their sobs could not now disturb little Alan.

"Don't cry, Nettie," said Alan. "When Dr. Craig gets here he 'll know just the right thing to do. Ken 's had a great deal more experience than I have had."

"And Dr. Smith 's very good in accident cases," said Mr. Baird. "He cured you after that terrible time when you were thrown from your horse. You seemed as near death as this child does. I wish we 'd got you to send for him last night. He might have persuaded you not to start with the baby this morning."

"Oh! that was a dreadful ride for the baby," wailed Nettie; "I wish we had n't gone one step."

"So do I," said Alan. "It was a great mistake." Such an admission showed how deep his trouble was.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ALAN'S HARD-WON VICTORY.

TIP was the first to return, not having so far to ride as Thad. Mr. Baird hurried out to receive his message, and came back, looking much discouraged.

"There 's no hope of getting Dr. Smith, he 's fast in his chair with rheumatism; this storm 's brought on a bad attack. Anybody that wants his advice will have to go to him."

"That 's just what we can't do," said Alan. "But it 's not so bad as if Ken failed us; I trust more in him. Here 's Thad now. He 's made a quick trip. I 'll see what he has to say."

Thad was breathless from fast riding, and yet he had brought no good news. Alan's heart sank as he listened. Dr. Craig had already left home, early as it was, when Thad reached his house, having been summoned to assist Dr. Pratt in an important operation. He had to ride far, and there was no certainty as to when he would return. He intended to make a round of calls among his own patients on his way back.

“Madam Pratt an’ Mrs. Ken wuz both pow’ful sorry to heah how bad Little Massa wuz after allus bein’ so purty an’ peart; an’ dey ’ll send de doctor quick as he gits home, sutenly. But mebbe ’t won’t be till on todes to-morrer mo’nin’.”

How Alan regretted that he had not devoted himself more to his profession, as he watched beside his suffering child that day. He might have known as much as Kenneth, if he had taken advantage of all his opportunities, instead of wasting his time in idle pleasure. Now how ignorant he knew himself to be, just when wisdom was most needed. His son’s life was in peril, and he did not know how to save him. He longed for Kenneth. It was a bitter thought that much of this trouble might have been prevented if he had not been too proud and self-willed to send for him the previous night.

The child grew worse; he saw symptoms which filled him with dread. He did what he could, but remedies seemed useless. Night came; Nettie went to bed, worn-out, and suffering with a bad cold, but the others watched through the long hours. When day broke Phœbe persuaded her mother to come out to the porch for some fresh air; for the fire had been kept up for the baby’s sake, and the room was stifling hot.

Mr. Baird went to look after Tip; the stock on both places was under his care in this emergency, for Thad was useful in the house.

Alan and Thad sat watching the baby.

"Oh, how I wish Ken would come!" said Alan.

"He 'll be heah, Marse Alan, suten sho, de fus' minute he kin come; we-all knows dat, 'ca'se we-all knows Doc Ken. Dey wuz afeard up to his house dat he 'd be kep' away all night, an' it mus' be dat what 's hendered; but we kin be lookin' fer him now."

Alan was as sure as Thad that Kenneth would come as soon as possible; he had already won a great name for promptness and reliability. Alan felt ashamed when he remembered how often he himself had let his own pleasure or comfort come before the welfare of his patients. He knew now what distress and anxiety waiting for the doctor could cause. He was beginning at last to understand something of a physician's responsibility.

Thad, looking at him as he sat with his eyes fixed on the baby, thought, "Marse Alan 's goin' through de flint mills now, fo' sho."

"It seems as if little Alan would never get over the chill he took in the rain," said his father. "O Thad, he 's in a fearful state!"

"Yes, Marse Alan, I kin see dat. If you could git him good an' warm ag'in, mebbe he 'd come roun'."

"But what 's to warm him? Oh! why did I start on that journey with him after he got that fearful hurt? See, Thad, his limbs are twisting. Oh, this is too dreadful!"

"What you 'fraid of, Marse Alan? Lopjoy?" It seemed a fearful word to Thad — he did not dare do more than whisper it.

Alan nodded gloomily; at any other time he would have laughed at Thad's mistaken pronunciation, but to see his child showing symptoms of lock-jaw drove all merriment from him.

"Pore Little Massa! My! jes' to think o' de mischief dat 's come to him! An' you don't know nothin' mo' to do fer him?"

Alan shook his head. "I am afraid his spine is injured, and that wetting 's made matters ten times worse."

"If he wuz ter git inter a pow'ful big sweat, it mought be some help."

"Yes, that 's what he needs. He was so warm before the rain. Then that sudden drenching checked the perspiration. I 've done everything, and I can't bring it back. O Thad!"

Alan's pitiful appeal struck Thad to the heart, and set him to thinking his hardest. He looked at the baby, then at the anxious, baffled father.

"Marse Alan," said he, "dere is sumpin' dat ain't been tried yit."

"What is it, Thad?" Alan was so desperate and hopeless as to be glad to follow even a slave's advice.

"It 's de way de Injuns cures demselves when dey gits a bad cold. Pukpuggee an' Ahila both tole me de story. Dey makes a little tent out o' skins jes' big 'nough ter creep inter, an' de sick man gits in, an' dey lay hot stuns all roun' him, an' somebody 's in dar wid a pail o' water. An' deir frien's outside pin de tent down snug to de groun' so 's de air can't git in noways; an' den de well man inside pours de water on dem stuns till de tent gits steamin' an' pipin' hot; an' de sick man gits inter sich a drippin' sweat dat his cold 's fai'ly druv away, an' he comes creepin' outer dat tent cured up. I been wonderin' if we could fetch Little Massa to by dat kind o' doctorin'."

"It 's worth thinking about." Alan did not take long to consider, but presently said, "You may light my spirit lamp for me, Thad. Now bring that splint-bottomed chair over here close to the cradle, and set the lamp under it."

Alan seated himself in the chair. Thad placed the baby in his arms, just as he was, lying on his little feather bed, wrapped in his cradle blankets. Then Thad pinned blankets around Alan and the chair, till only his head was visible. The blankets reached the floor, and lay in folds there.

“It could n’t be snugger, Marse Alan.”

And then the lamp began to do its duty. The heat came up, wave after wave, hotter and hotter. Alan had never borne pain for the sake of anyone; he had heretofore lived for himself alone; but now he was suffering for the little being that he loved best in the world, yes, suffering intensely. Every moment the heat seemed greater and less bearable. Perspiration poured off his face, he was dripping from head to foot.

Thad watched in silence, thinking, “Marse Alan am in de fiery furnace now, fer sho.”

The two watchers on the porch were frightened by the quiet of the room.

“O Phœbe!” said Mrs. Baird, “that door’s been shut so long that I’m afraid to go in.”

The window was shut also; but Phœbe went to look, then beckoned to her mother. They saw Alan wrapped in blankets, his face fiery red, almost as if it might blaze. They understood at a glance.

"Alan is doing all he can, Phoebe."

"Yes, it 's wonderful!" Phoebe's long-lost faith in her brother was beginning to return.

Alan endured his fiery furnace as long as he possibly could. He saw that the baby breathed more easily, he touched his hands, and found they were moist.

He motioned to Thad to unloose his fetters, and when he saw the baby's face, beads of moisture stood on his forehead. Oh, joy! The remedy had been successful! And again little Alan was laid in his cradle.

An hour after that Kenneth came. "He is in a natural sleep," said he, looking at the baby. "You may begin to hope."

Alan told him of Thad's successful remedy.

"That was the best of devices. The baby had all the benefits of a vapor bath, thanks to Thad's suggestion. The most experienced physicians could learn from him."

"Yes, Thad 's a treasure!" At last Alan was ready to do his faithful servant justice.

Alan had thought of Kenneth as a rival since they had both begun to practise medicine in Chilhowee, though he knew that his jealousy had no foundation. Now he saw how true was Kenneth's friendship and

Little Alan's days spent in Thad's care were as happy as a child's could be. They sauntered about during all the pleasant weather in the fields and lanes and among the trees. Dandy was the most amiable of horses, willing to wait or jog on at their pleasure. And Thad taught his little charge all kinds of forest lore, having a never-ending store of bird and bee and bear stories.

But the happiest hour of the day came at sunset. When the child saw the long slanting rays, he would say, "Pa 's coming home! Make Dandy tote me quick, Thad!" And they would ride to meet Dr. Alan.

There was no sound more charming to Alan's ear than his little son's gleeful shout when he saw him in the distance; the child's eyes and ears were quicker even than Thad's.

Then when the riders met, little Alan's first demand was, "Pa! O pa! take me!"

"Little Massa don't like nothin' so well as ridin' wid you, Marse Alan."

Alan, going home, holding his boy in his arms, listening to his bright and loving words, wondered that such joy was permitted him.

Now even Phœbe was proud and satisfied regarding her brother. It was a constant surprise and de-

light to see him thoughtful of his mother, doing all he could for her comfort.

"I wish you could see Alan's devotion to ma," she wrote to her Aunt Rachel; "he really seems to be trying to make up for the long years that he made her unhappy; and she is so happy now, that I almost think she has forgotten those days."

But it was Chilhowee Parsonage which was still the model for happiness, and bright, cheerful activity. The parson and his wife rejoiced that Alec and Bess yet delighted in their home. "It is as much as we could hope or expect to have two children left under our roof. And it won't last always, mother. Our Bess is growing up into as bright a flower as ever bloomed; some one will be sure to search her out, even though she is hidden in this wilderness."

"Well, Donald, when the day comes, you and I must both be willing to spare her; but we need n't be borrowing trouble in looking forward to the time when we must say good-by to the dear child. Her fate is in wiser keeping than ours."

And Mrs. Craig went on in her useful, self-forgetting life, diffusing comfort and happiness to all around her. And the parson still ministered to his people in Chilhowee Church, and took long rides in search of his scattered flock, carrying his glad tidings

to the lonely, isolated homes, where he was welcome as the sunshine.

Bess tended her flower-garden, and shared Alec's pleasure and interest in the study of their numerous bird visitants.

"Birds and bees and flowers would make a home beautiful anywhere," said Alec; "and just here on this Chilhowee farm there seems to be something new and interesting all the time."

"It is indeed a highly favored spot," said his father; "and you are a highly favored young farmer, my son, to know how to live with wide-open eyes and mind alert. I am thankful you are not like the people who go through the world 'seeing no more than the eye of a potato sees, and hearing no more than an ear of corn hears.'"

Alec kept up a correspondence with John on general topics, but especially agriculture and ornithology.

John was still at Grandfather Craig's, where he was of first importance, which pleased him well. His grandparents rejoiced to have such a staff for their old age as this capable, self-reliant, and affectionate grandson.

To Parson Craig it was the next thing to having John under his own roof, to think of him in his own

early home. It seemed as if no adjustment of his life could have been more satisfactory.

The parson had the same feeling regarding Kenneth, whose home was only an hour's ride distant. Their frequent meetings were a source of great delight, and the parson always took great joy in his son's little family. Kenneth's practice was large, but his deep interest in his profession kept him from feeling the burden.

It was really the two clerical sons who seemed farthest away from their home, but the parson's ready pen bridged the gap. His experience in the ministry, and the deep sympathy he felt with them in their work, made his letters very valuable. And soon the young clergymen gladdened the parsonage by each coming home on a visit.

Hugh was as devoted as ever to his mission, which had prospered so that there was much work to be done; but now he had Ahila for his helper, which pleased them both. Ahila was so efficient that Hugh was able to ride home for a short holiday. How bright his mother made his little visit! What joy it gave him to sit at ease beside her as she knit or spun, and talk his heart out to her and to his father, his truest sympathizers! Hugh was looking better and brighter than ever before.

Alec and Bessie took him to see Snip in the clover-patch.

"Snip has retired on his laurels," Bessie said.

"Yes," said Hugh; "when I remember what he carried me through, I reckon him truly a war-horse, though he did n't fight under General Jackson like Chucky Jack."

"And you 're treating him accordingly," said Alec. For Hugh fed his old pony on apples and hoe-cake and maple sugar, and petted him as he had in the days when he had carried him so faithfully; and Snip was evidently happy as he felt the touch of his master's hand.

"I can never care for another pony as I did for Snip," Hugh said.

"I should think not," said Alec. "I can understand how that is since I've had Liberty. Father says that 's the way we always feel about our first horse. We think there never was such a prize."

"You don't like your new dog as you did Ring, do you, Hugh?" said Bessie.

"Oh, no! how could I? But Mum 's a fine fellow, a perfect watch-dog. The Indian chief that gave him to me had trained him thoroughly."

"Mum 's too quiet for me," said Alec. "Now look at him!" The great black dog had his eyes fixed on

his master. "You would n't know there was any life in him, if you did n't see his eyes. I like a dog that wags his tail, and shows when he 's pleased."

"This dog has learned Indian ways too thoroughly to show his feelings," said Hugh. "I can never make a pet of him, as I did of Ring and Sport; but he 's devoted to me in his way, and is really a great safeguard. I don't fear any beast in the forest when Mum 's beside me. And he 'd be more than a match for almost any man in a fight, I imagine."

"I suppose I 'd like such a protector if I was in danger," said Bess; "but Mum almost frightens me. I can see he 's a savage by the look in his eyes. I call him a real Indian; he 's stealthy as one."

"He 's certainly the kind of dog to please an Indian," said Alec.

"You should see him with Ahila," said Hugh. "Then you'd realize what a knowing, obedient creature a dog can be. They understand each other perfectly."

Hugh's visit was not long enough to satisfy any one. "You were our home boy for so many years, that it 's been hard to do without you," said his mother; "and it 's hard to see you go now."

"O mother! if it was n't that my work calls me, and my heart is in it, I should be contented to stay

here always, for home 's the pleasantest spot in the world."

Soon after Hugh left them Don came. His visit was as short as Hugh's; but it was the brightest that could be imagined, for this was the day of Don's greatest joy, when he brought his beautiful young bride home. Don presented Agnes to his parents with the certainty that they would love her. How charming she was, how lovable to this new circle of relatives; she captivated them all.

Don, who had never been proud, was evidently so now, at which no one who saw Agnes could wonder. It delighted his parents to see his gladness and joy.

The visit was over all too soon. Ever since the day Don had told his father his story of Agnes, he had held her dear for his son's sake; now he loved her for her own.

"Agnes, my dear child," he said at parting, "how glad I should be to have you and Don always near me, that I might be filled with your delightful company; but even when we are far separated, it will be joy to me to know that your destiny for life is now bound in with the child of my warmest affections."

Such words thrilled Agnes. It was much to her to have won such a place in the heart of her new

father, for from her childhood she had been fatherless.

Don, who also heard, was deeply touched. "O father! is that the way you think of me?"

"My son, my dearest son, how could it be otherwise?"

"And now I have Agnes, too! Oh, how wonderful!"

It was a happy parting, for it was full of love and hope. Then Don went back to his arduous but congenial work in Powell's Valley, where the presence of Agnes lightened all his tasks, and made life brighter to him than it ever was before.

The parson often reflected on the happiness and prosperity of his "boys." Next to his own sons he was deeply interested in the welfare of Leigh and Ned and Alan. The characters and conduct of the two former had always satisfied him, and now the change in Alan made him watch his career with pleasure.

But the thrill of truest joy came when he thought of Don and Agnes. Yes, Don was certainly the favored and favorite "Chilhowee Boy."

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